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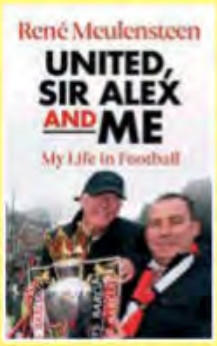

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In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

Italy...Romelu Lukaku sits amid the stunning backdrop of the Roman Colosseum after sealing his summer transfer to Roma

Brazil...Neymar celebrates after netting in a 2026 World Cup qualifier against Bolivia to overtake Pele as Brazil men's all-time record goalscorer

Switzerland...Ildefons Lima is subbed off in his final match for Andorra to end a remarkable 26-year international career *(more Euro 2024 qualifiers on page 74)*

Colombia...a supporter cheers on *Los Cafeteros* ahead of their 2026 World Cup qualifier against Venezuela

France...Morocco and Burkina Faso players show their support for the victims of the Moroccan earthquake *(more on page 78)*

Ecuador...16-year-old Kendry Paez becomes the second-youngest player – behind only Diego Maradona – in South American men's international football history

Germany...Takefusa Kubo and Ao Tanaka celebrate during Japan's 4-1 friendly win in Wolfsburg, a result which later led to the sacking of Germany head coach Hansi Flick

England...Declan Rice celebrates scoring a dramatic late winner against Manchester United, his first goal since joining Arsenal

Saudi Arabia... Al Hilal mark the arrival of Brazil superstar Neymar with a fireworks and drone display

Argentina...Enner Valencia of Brazilian semi-finalists Internacional attempts a bicycle-kick against River Plate in the Copa Libertadores knockout rounds *(more on page 76)*

Italy...Napoli's Piotr Zielinski takes a corner against Frosinone

Spain...Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham celebrates scoring against Getafe – his fifth goal in four games – just days after becoming the first-ever Englishman to win La Liga's Player of the Month award

Monaco...Erling Haaland and Aitana Bonmati *(more on page 48)* collect their awards after being named UEFA's Men's and Women's Players of the Year for 2022-23

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FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

No summer transfer window is complete without a long-running saga hanging over it, and this year's Harry Kane plotline was more thought provoking than most. Is it better to chase trophies or goalscoring records? To remain a legend at one club or compete with the elite? Stay at home or test yourself abroad?

In the end, of course, Kane elected to join Bayern Munich in a deal worth over €100 million, pausing his pursuit of the Premier League goal record in exchange for a tilt at lifting the Champions League. While it's still early days, he appears to have settled in immediately at his new home, completely at ease in this world-class environment.

Kane's rise from a series of uninspiring loans in English football's lower reaches to one of the biggest clubs in Europe is a story of dedication and perseverance, and we wanted to tell it in this issue's player biography.

Kane, like so many of this summer's other biggest movers – Ruben Neves, Jude Bellingham, James Maddison and others – cut his teeth in the English Football League, and we've taken a look at some of the other young EFL graduates bidding to make a name for themselves around Europe this season.

> Kane's rise is a story of dedication and perseverance, and we wanted to tell it

In contrast, Aitana Bonmati nurtured her talents in Europe's finest footballing finishing school – Barcelona's *La Masia* academy – with stunning results, as anyone who watched her pulling the strings on the way to Spain's World Cup victory in Australia and New Zealand can attest. Sadly, of course, the behaviour of Spanish football federation president Luis Rubiales (pages 14 and 71) has somewhat overshadowed the team's magnificence, but we have dedicated a few pages to shining a spotlight on the supremely talented Barca playmaker.

Elsewhere in this month's issue there are, as always, reports and findings from all four corners of the football world, plus a stroll down memory lane reflecting on England's infamous friendly against Australia 20 years ago ahead of their October clash. Read on and enjoy.

Jamie Evans, Assistant Editor

PSG new boy... striker Randal Kolo Muani was deadline day's biggest signing

EUROPE

Record-breaking summer window

Another record-breaking transfer window saw clubs in Europe's top five leagues spend €5.68 billion this summer, according to analysis by *Deloitte*, with the Premier League contributing almost half of that total (€2.74bn).

The figure sees the Premier League break the £2bn barrier for the first time, with the £2.36bn gross spent in total considerably up on last summer's previous record of £1.92bn.

Net spend in the Premier League was €1.18bn, dwarfing the rest of Europe's top five leagues, with only France's Ligue 1 also spending more on transfers than they received (€35m). Germany's Bundesliga (€290m), Italy's Serie A (€165m) and Spain's La Liga (€115m) were all left in profit.

Over £255m was spent on deadline day alone by Premier League clubs, although the biggest deal of the day was actually secured by PSG, who signed France striker Randal Kolo Muani from Eintracht Frankfurt for €90m.

The two biggest deals of the summer came in the Premier League, with Moises Caicedo's move to Chelsea and Declan Rice's switch to Arsenal both breaking the £100m barrier, but those transfers could have been blown out of the water had Liverpool not rejected Al Ittihad's £150m offer for Mohamed Salah, or if Kylian Mbappe had joined Al Hilal after PSG gave the Saudi club permission to talk to the Frenchman after making a world-record £259m bid.

Indeed, the Saudi Pro League was the driver of much of this summer's expenditure, helping the Premier League more than double its previous record for sales. Al Hilal were the biggest net spenders (€353m according to *Transfermarkt*) with over €900m spent in total by Saudi clubs.

The sorts of sums involved has led to much conjecture about whether the league poses a threat to the hegemony of the European club game, with PSG president Nasser Al Khelaifi and UEFA boss Aleksander Ceferin both commenting on the topic recently.

See pages 18–20 for more transfers

"As far as I know, Mbappe and Haaland don't dream of Saudi Arabia. I don't believe that the best players at the pinnacle of their careers would go to Saudi Arabia"

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin dismisses the threat of the Saudi Pro League to European football in an interview with *L'Equipe*

FRANCE

Ronaldo out of Ballon d'Or running

The nominees for this year's Ballon d'Or awards have been announced by *France Football*.

In the men's category, Erling Haaland and Lionel Messi lead the way, with five-time winner Cristiano Ronaldo not included in the shortlist for the first time since 2003. Meanwhile Aitana Bonmati will be the favourite for the women's prize after recently winning the World Cup with Spain and picking up the UEFA Women's Player of the Year award in August.

The winners will be announced October 30.

2023 BALLON D'OR NOMINEES

• Julian Alvarez *(Man. City, Arg)* • Nicolo Barella *(Inter, Ita)* • Jude Bellingham *(Real Madrid, Eng)* • Karim Benzema *(Al Ittihad, Fra)* • Yassine Bounou *(Al Hilal, Mar)* • Kevin De Bruyne *(Man. City, Bel)* • Ruben Dias *(Man. City, Por)* • Antoine Griezmann *(Atletico Madrid, Fra)* • Ilkay Gundogan *(Barcelona, Ger)* • Josko Gvardiol *(Man. City, Cro)* • Erling Haaland *(Man. City, Nor)* • Harry Kane *(Bayern Munich, Eng)* • Kim Min-jae *(Bayern Munich, Kor)* • Khvicha Kvaratskhelia *(Napoli, Geo)* • Robert Lewandowski *(Barcelona, Pol)* • Emiliano Martinez *(Aston Villa, Arg)* • Lautaro Martinez *(Inter, Arg)* • Kylian Mbappe *(PSG, Fra)* • Lionel Messi *(Inter Miami, Arg)* • Luka Modric *(Real Madrid, Cro)* • Randal Kolo Muani *(PSG, Fra)* • Jamal Musiala *(Bayern Munich, Ger)* • Martin Odegaard *(Arsenal, Nor)* • Andre Onana *(Man. United, Cmr)* • Victor Osimhen *(Napoli, Nga)* • Rodri *(Man. City, Spa)* • Mohamed Salah *(Liverpool, Egy)* • Bukayo Saka *(Arsenal, Eng)* • Bernardo Silva *(Man. City, Por)* • Vinicius Junior *(Real Madrid, Bra)*

2023 BALLON D'OR FEMININ NOMINEES

• Aitana Bonmati *(Barcelona, Spa)* • Millie Bright *(Chelsea, Eng)* • Linda Caicedo *(Real Madrid, Col)* • Olga Carmona *(Real Madrid, Spa)* • Rachel Daly *(Aston Villa, Eng)* • Debinha *(Kansas City Current, Bra)* • Kadidiatou Diani *(Lyon, Fra)* • Mary Earps *(Man. United, Eng)* • Patricia Guijarro *(Barcelona, Spa)* • Yui Hasegawa *(Man. City, Jpn)* • Amanda Ilestedt *(Arsenal, Swe)* • Sam Kerr *(Chelsea, Aus)* • Mapi Leon *(Barcelona, Spa)* • Katie McCabe *(Arsenal, Irl)* • Hinata Miyazawa *(Man. United, Jpn)* • Lena Oberdorf *(Wolfsburg, Ger)* • Asisat Oshoala *(Barcelona, Nga)* • Ewa Pajor *(Wolfsburg, Pol)* • Salma Paralluelo *(Barcelona, Spa)* • Alexandra Popp *(Wolfsburg, Ger)* • Hayley Raso *(Real Madrid, Aus)* • Alba Redondo *(Levante, Spa)* • Guro Reiten *(Chelsea, Nor)* • Wendie Renard *(Lyon, Fra)* • Fridolina Rolfo *(Barcelona, Swe)* • Jill Roord *(Man. City, Ned)* • Khadija Shaw *(Man. City, Jam)* • Sophia Smith *(Portland Thorns, USA)* • Georgia Stanway *(Bayern Munich, Eng)* • Daphne van Domselaar *(Aston Villa, Ned)*

The month in numbers

Eye-catching facts and stats from the world of football this month...

850

Number of career goals scored by Cristiano Ronaldo after he netted in Al Nassr's 5-1 thrashing of Al Hazm in September.

Cristiano Ronaldo... 850 and counting

10

Goalkeepers nominated for the Yashin Trophy – Yassine Bounou, Thibaut Courtois, Ederson, Dominik Livakovic, Mike Maignan, Emiliano Martinez, Andre Onana, Aaron Ramsdale, Brice Samba and Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

2

Bicycle-kick goals scored by Aurelien Francois in consecutive group games from corners as Mauritius reached the semi-finals of the 2023 Indian Ocean Island Games football tournament, which was won by hosts Madagascar.

1

Erling Haaland became the first foreign player since Ruud van Nistelrooy in 2001-02 to win the PFA Player of the Year award in his debut Premier League season.

7

Goals Atletico Madrid scored on their visit to Rayo Vallecano at the end of August to seal their biggest-ever away victory in La Liga.

2032

Italy and Turkey have made an official request with UEFA to merge their bids to host the 2032 European Championship.

119

International caps won by Republic of Ireland Women's wing-back Aine O'Gorman after the Shamrock Rovers star announced her retirement from international football.

3

Nottingham Forest's Nigerian striker Taiwo Awoniyi became only the third African player – after Egypt's Mohamed Salah and Togo's Emmanuel Adebayor – to score in seven consecutive Premier League matches.

10

Goals scored in Wrexham's thrilling 5-5 draw with Swindon in League Two, with the Red Dragons scoring two stoppage-time goals and coming back from 4-1 down.

16

Age of Barcelona winger Yamine Lamal – 16 years and 57 days to be exact – who became Spain's youngest-ever player and goalscorer in their Euro 2024 qualifying win against Georgia.

1

The first-ever VAR trial at a Women's Super League stadium was conducted in September, as Chelsea beat Roma 3-2 in a pre-season friendly at Kingsmeadow.

2

Vietnam won their second consecutive U23 ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) title after beating Indonesia 6-5 on penalties in the final following a goalless draw.

6

Consecutive years the United States Women's team held the number one spot in the FIFA world rankings before they were knocked off the top by Sweden in August.

10

Number of players nominated for the Kopa Trophy – Alejandro Balde, Jude Bellingham, Jamal Musiala, Gavi, Eduardo Camavinga, Elye Wahi, Rasmus Hojlund, Pedri, Xavi Simons and Antonio Silva.

Talents...Bellingham and Musiala are the only players to be nominated for both the Ballon d'Or award and Kopa Trophy

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Infantino brought back down to earth

Luis Rubiales affair calls time on the best half-year of the FIFA boss' presidency

The fall-out from the Luis Rubiales affair will roll on far beyond the immediate embarrassment incurred by the Spanish Football Federation. Just when Gianni Infantino must have thought he had sailed out into clear blue water.

Up until Rubiales, the one-time Hamilton Academical full-back, wiped the positivity of the 2023 Women's World Cup out of the global headlines, Infantino had been enjoying the best half-year of his FIFA presidency.

First box ticked was at the start of March when Swiss prosecutors shut down an allegation that Infantino had breached company regulations over his use of a private jet to fly back to Switzerland from Suriname in 2017.

Red flags had been raised because Infantino's original version failed the test of veracity. Infantino claimed he undertook the flight to keep a meeting with Aleksander Ceferin, however the UEFA president had apparently been on an official trip to Armenia that day.

Infantino duly changed his story, ascribing the journey instead to meet Vassilios Skouris, the former European Court of Justice president and new FIFA ethics chair, a meeting Infantino had wanted to be treated confidential. Documentation from FIFA's travel department supported its president. Hence frustrated prosecutors had to admit defeat in not the first FIFA controversy over private jets.

Infantino had sidestepped a similar issue early in his presidency while disgraced former secretary-general Jerome Valcke had also been caught out in his time. A bonus for Infantino was that the Swiss attorney-general's office, having raised the complaint, had to pay all his and FIFA's legal costs.

More delight to come.

Perfect year ruined...Infantino had been enjoying 2023 up until the Rubiales scandal

Little more than a week later saw a triumphant Infantino re-elected unopposed and by acclamation at FIFA Congress in Kigali, Rwanda. No surprise. After all, his FIFA had registered record revenues of $7.5 billion, more than $1bn above forecasts and in spite of the COVID pandemic. Greater largesse for all 211 member associations.

> All his troubles were behind him. What could possibly go wrong?

Icing on the Infantino cake was laid on with a trowel this summer, with the intenton of prosecutors in Switzerland to scrap the investigation into his secret meetings in 2016 and 2017 with the then attorney-general, Michael Lauber. Critical FIFA-watchers had speculated long and hard over the coincidence of the dates, which fell just after the enthronement of Infantino as king of world football.

This case had been the most dangerous for Infantino. Michel Platini still believes that Infantino, his general secretary at UEFA, had long been plotting to scupper his FIFA ambitions. Investigations had rumbled on for three years with Infantino insisting on his innocence before ultimately being vindicated.

Not that Platini believes this. His legal complaint in the French courts was rebuffed by a verdict that this was an issue for the Swiss. So effectively, that too has been rendered a legal dead-end.

All Infantino's Christmases had come at once.

The shadows had been lifted: the private jets, the stress of seeking re-election and the conspiracy theories. Infantino could happily elude the ever-sceptical European media at what he forecast, correctly,

as a record Women's World Cup. He had even managed to squeeze a few extra million dollars out of European broadcasters who feared a portrayal of being on the wrong side of history in their under-valuation of women's sport.

Infantino, ever since being first elected in the spring of 2016 and as mentioned here previously, has become increasingly media-shy. Not for Infantino the Sepp Blatter strategy of charming journalists whenever and how ever often as possible. Infantino has even perfected the technique of filibustering his own press conferences.

But why not? He might point out that he is answerable to his member associations, not to a gaggle of irritatingly inquisitive journalists. Similarly, Joao Havelange felt no need of media self-justification during his 24 iron-clad years at the helm.

Infantino did attract a minor media fuss for disappearing from the Women's World Cup to swing around FIFA's far-flung Pacific Island outposts. But, if he had even bothered to take note, he could have posited predictable media negativity had he carved a massive carbon footprint by undertaking a separate excursion from Zurich.

Back at the finals he could enthuse: "It's welcoming, it's warm, it's smiling...I'm a happy man and there are hundreds of thousands of happy men, women, girls and boys who come to the matches, and millions and millions watching it from home. So, a great success. Great games, great goals and underdogs who create surprises or give the favourites a tough time."

When Infantino comes to write his memoirs he may reflect on those concluding weeks of the Women's World Cup as among his happiest times in power. All his troubles were behind him. What could possibly go wrong? And then he led the grotesquely overstuffed medals presentation party down on to the pitch in Sydney.

FIFA should have learned its lesson from the chaotic ceremonials at the men's World Cup in Lusail last December. The fewer people on the pitch the better. Certainly no FA minions, no celebrity hangers-on (even if Salt Bae is a favourite chef) and no families. This is the pinnacle career-defining moment for the players, the stars of the show (and yes, okay, even the referee).

Instead, once again, FIFA paraded a nonsensical crocodile of devotees, including Spanish federation boss Luis Rubiales. In a matter of seconds he would offer a stark reminder that, in reality, world football's culture lags a long way behind the idealistically sugar-coated messaging from Down Under.

Infantino's horror at seeing Rubiales spoiling his party was evidenced by the need of a mere six days for FIFA's ethics department – which usually operates at the pace of a cautious snail – to first launch an investigation into Rubiales' behaviour and then suspend him for 90 days. This was also a diplomatic relief for Ceferin, spared any pressure to act over one of his own vice-presidents.

A post-finals media vacuum which Infantino would have wanted to sparkle with a joyous celebration of women's football (and his FIFA, by association) was monopolised, instead, by negative headlines.

As Infantino said via Instagram, in massive understatement: "Sadly, the well-deserved celebrations for these magnificent champions were spoiled by what happened at the final whistle. And what continued to happen in following days. This should never have happened."

Yet FIFA's rapid-fire reaction over Rubiales was in sharp contrast to the ponderous manner in which it shuffles through sexual harassment allegations from female players and officials around the world. In France, for example, long-time Infantino supporter Noel Le Graet – who has always denied any wrongdoing – was toppled only under pressure from the sports ministry.

Why the alacrity on this occasion? The answer was perhaps evinced most succinctly in the *Marca* headline that greeted the suspension of Rubiales: "Infantino saves the 2030 World Cup."

Spain, Portugal and Morocco offer FIFA the most financially-attractive bid to host the centenary World Cup in 2030. Rubiales threatened to cost it votes. Portuguese officials were appalled while leaders of their South American rivals (Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Paraguay) were reportedly struggling to keep a straight face.

After all, nothing in the grand chess game of international football politics matters more to FIFA and its president than the World Cup. The men's World Cup, that is.

Action...Infantino (R) and FIFA were quick to suspend Rubiales (L) from all football-related activities

BOOKS THIS MONTH

60 YEARS OF THE WORLD CUP
By Brian Barwick
(Pitch Publishing, £16.99)

Sixty Years of the World Cup is a fun, nostalgic and frank reflection on the author's six-decade association with football's biggest showpiece event. Barwick guides the reader through 16 World Cup tournaments with a remarkable set of unique personal and professional memories, shaped by his experiences in major broadcasting and football executive roles, as former BBC and ITV executive and former CEO of the Football Association.

THE CONQUERORS
By Dev Bajwa
(Pitch Publishing, £18.99)

The Conquerors charts the rise, fall and rejuvenation of AC Milan across one of the club's most legendary eras, under manager and former club favourite Carlo Ancelotti. Returning to a then-disjointed *Rossoneri* dressing room as first team coach in 2001, this is a story of incredible talent, iconic moments and the kind of improbable redemption usually reserved for Hollywood movie scripts.

Jonathan WILSON

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Midfield price inflation

Why central midfielders that can multi-task cost more than ever

Early season games are often overshadowed by absence, by the players who have left and the players who are yet to arrive. Chelsea's 1-1 draw with Liverpool on the first weekend of the Premier League season, breezy and open as it was, was defined by the fact that both sides lacked a player at the base of midfield – a shortcoming shared by so many clubs that the price of central midfielders has risen to unprecedented levels.

At the final whistle of that game, as Enzo Fernandez and Alexis Mac Allister embraced, it came almost as a shock to be reminded that, between them, Chelsea and Liverpool have the central midfield that won the World Cup for Argentina – a useful corrective to anybody who thinks that all midfields must feature an anchor whose main function is to destroy. Modern midfields, rather, are about balance, about having that defensive capability for sure, but also about having the positional sense and tactical awareness to operate in a press. And, these days, nobody in an elite team is not a good passer.

Price inflation... Moises Caicedo, Declan Rice and Enzo Fernandez all cost over £100m

Fernandez is a fine example of the modern midfield holder, sitting deep, blocking gaps when out of possession but adept at finding space and such a good passer that his completion rate at Chelsea hovers around 90 per cent. Mac Allister is a slightly more aggressive player, more adept at scoring goals and creating chances, but also a player who rarely concedes possession. Last season at Brighton he scored ten league goals, averaged 1.3 key passes per game and still maintained a pass completion rate over 87 per cent. It's just that neither can do it alone.

That Liverpool found themselves lacking a deep-lying player was understandable. They probably weren't expecting to lose either Fabinho or Jordan Henderson, never mind both. Chelsea just seemed to have ignored the position amid their swirl of signings until they suddenly signed two: Moises Caicedo from Brighton for £115m and Romeo Lavia from Southampton for £53m. Even by the standards of the Todd Boehly splurge, those were remarkable sums. Liverpool ended up with Wataru Endo from Stuttgart for a comparatively modest £16.2m and, on deadline day, Ryan Gravenberch from Bayern Munich for £34m. Given Jude Bellingham's range of abilities, Real Madrid must feel like they got a real bargain getting him for £88.5m at the beginning of the summer.

> The market in central midfielders has never felt so inflated

Caicedo is a player of immense promise. He ran the opening game of last season, when Brighton won away to Manchester United for the first time in their history, and was consistently excellent across the campaign. He is a more overtly defensive player than either Fernandez or Mac Allister, averaging 2.7 tackles and 1.5 interceptions per game last season while maintaining a pass completion rate of 89 per cent. As with any player leaving Brighton there must be a slight concern about whether he will be so effective away from the Amex and, unlike Fernandez, whom he supplanted as the most expensive signing in British history, he has not yet shown he can dominate Champions League games, but the potential is there and he and Fernandez would seem to have complementary skills. The one real doubt is their age – Fernandez 22 and Caicedo 21 – which may, on the one hand, mean that they run games in tandem for Chelsea for the next decade, but the lack of experience is a potential issue, particularly if it takes time for Chelsea's new signings to settle.

Romeo Lavia ...Chelsea also splashed out on the Belgium midfielder

Lavia is 19 and another in the more defensive mould. He made 2.1 tackles and 1.1 interceptions per game last season, while completing 86 per cent of his passes – a startlingly high figure given how direct and/or poor Southampton were at times. Again, he would appear to have all the potential to become a very high-class player indeed; it's the fee that raises eyebrows for somebody with only one season's experience.

But then maybe that is just what central midfielders cost these days. Declan Rice went for £105m, Mason

Mount (with just a year left on his contract) for £55m, Sandro Tonali for £55m, Manuel Ugarte for £51m, Ruben Neves for £47m...the market in central midfielders has never felt so inflated.

Perhaps that is simply a function of how valuable central midfielders have become in the modern game, how complicated their role has become. There was a period from the mid-'90s to fairly recently in which it seemed that midfield had become two bands: the difference between 4-3-3 and 4-2-3-1 often seemed that the former had a holder and two creators and the latter a creator and two holders.

More recently, however, it feels almost as though those distinct roles have started to bleed into each other again. The creators have to be able to press; the holders have to be able to pass and, ideally, get forward to break the lines. If they do not, there is a danger of becoming predictable. But to be both creator and destroyer is difficult. Not many players can do both, but a lot of clubs need that sort of midfielder. The result is that prices rise.

MOST EXPENSIVE DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDERS SINCE 2022

£115m	**Moises CAICEDO** *Brighton to Chelsea*
£106.8m	**Enzo FERNANDEZ** *Benfica to Chelsea*
£105m	**Declan RICE** *West Ham United to Arsenal*
£85.3m	**Aurelien TCHOUAMENI** *Monaco to Real Madrid*
£60m	**CASEMIRO** *Real Madrid to Man. United*
£55m	**Sandro TONALI** *Milan to Newcastle United*
£53m	**Romeo LAVIA** *Southampton to Chelsea*
£51m	**Manuel UGARTE** *Sporting to Paris Saint-Germain*
£47m	**Ruben NEVES** *Wolverhampton Wanderers to Al Hilal*
£42m	**Kalvin PHILLIPS** *Leeds United to Man. City*
£40m	**FABINHO** *Liverpool to Al Ittihad*

Gabri VEIGA

(Al Ahli)

In last month's issue, we described Al Nassr's Seko Fofana as the Saudi Pro League recruit with the most to offer Europe's top leagues, but it would be fair to say that that title now belongs to Gabri Veiga.

"Embarrassing", was the verdict of Real Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos after seeing the news on social media that Al Ahli had recruited the 21-year-old Spanish midfielder, who practically had his pick of clubs to choose from in the summer.

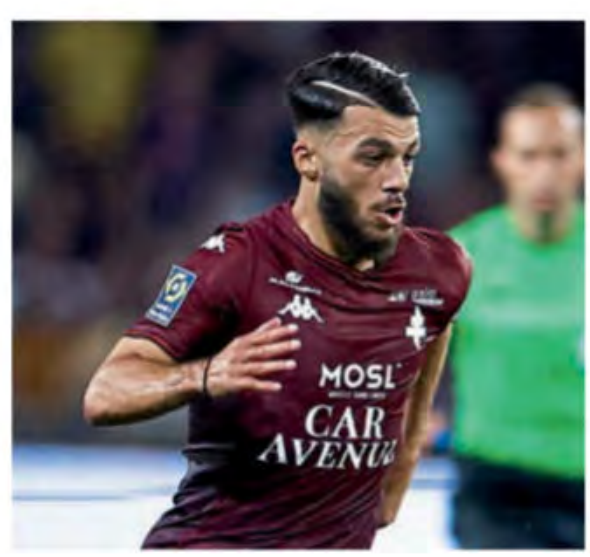
An impressive La Liga season with Celta Vigo – 11 goals and four assists in 36 games – had seen the Spain Under-21 international linked with a host of Premier League clubs and Italian champions Napoli, but instead he signed a three-year deal in Saudi Arabia worth a reported €30 million.

Daniel PERETZ
(Bayern Munich)
With first-choice goalkeeper and captain Manuel Neuer still recovering from a broken leg, Bayern completed the signing of the 23-year-old from Maccabi Tel Aviv, making him the first Israeli to play for the club.

Carlos BALEBA
(Brighton & Hove Albion)
The 19-year-old is the latest young talent to be spotted by Brighton's remarkable scouting system. Will be expected to replace Moises Caicedo after arriving for £23.2m from Lille.

DEIVID Washington
(Chelsea)
A tall striker, Deivid joins from Santos and is Chelsea's third teenage Brazilian signing of the year, following Angelo Gabriel earlier in the summer and Andrey Santos in January.

Georges MIKAUTADZE
(Ajax)
Georgia's latest exciting talent joined Ajax from Metz for €16m after finishing as Ligue 2's top scorer in 2022-23 with 23 goals.



"I can't see how we really can deny it, what can we do? We can say 'no' but the difference between the contracts here and the contracts there are that big that it causes problems"

Jurgen Klopp on the Saudi Pro League amid Liverpool rejecting a £150m bid from Al Ittihad for Mohamed Salah

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Blades buy...Archer

Toffees capture...Beto

German switch... Dortmund's Fullkrug

Tearful...Sergio Ramos

Botafogo new boy...Diego Costa

EUROPE

Nottingham Forest completed loan deals for World Cup winner **GONZALO MONTIEL** from Sevilla and **ANDREY SANTOS** from Chelsea, before raiding Corinthians for centre-back **MURILLO** for around £12.8m.

West Ham United signed **MOHAMMED KUDUS** from Ajax for £38m. Elsewhere, Sheffield United splashed out a reported £18.5m to sign England Under-21 striker **CAMERON ARCHER** from Aston Villa.

Everton paid a reported £26m for Portuguese striker **BETO** from Udinese, while Crystal Palace signed goalkeeper **DEAN HENDERSON** from Manchester United for £15m. Meanwhile **JONNY EVANS** agreed a one-year deal with United following his release by Leicester.

Wolves signed Uruguay defender **SANTIAGO BUENO** from Girona for £8.5m and Paraguayan winger **ENSO GONZALEZ** from Libertad for £5m.

GONCALO GUEDES left Wolves to return to Benfica on loan, **KIERAN TIERNEY** joined Real Sociedad on loan from Arsenal, while **TIMOTHY CASTAGNE** left Leicester for Fulham.

Portugal midfielder **JOAO MOUTINHO** moved to Braga after his Wolves contract expired, Sporting snapped up right-back **IVAN FRESNEDA** from Real Valladolid and Porto signed Mexico right-back **JORGE SANCHEZ** on loan from Ajax.

SERGIO RAMOS returned to his boyhood club Sevilla following his PSG release. The club also signed Belgium's **DODI LUKEBAKIO** from Hertha Berlin, while Celta Vigo signed Greece striker **ANASTASIOS DOUVIKAS** from Utrecht.

Napoli signed **JESPER LINDSTROM** from Eintracht Frankfurt, **MATTEO GUENDOUZI** joined Lazio on loan from Marseille, and Inter completed the £25m signing of France defender **BENJAMIN PAVARD** from Bayern Munich. **ALEXIS SANCHEZ** re-joined Inter after a year at Marseille, with **JOAQUIN CORREA** moving in the opposite direction on loan.

Roma completed loan deals for **ROMELU LUKAKU** from Chelsea and **SARDAR AZMOUN** from Bayer Leverkusen, with the German club replacing Azmoun with £20m-striker **NATHAN TELLA** from Southampton.

Rome presentation... Lukaku

Germany striker **NICLAS FULLKRUG** moved to Werder Bremen from Borussia Dortmund for £11.1m, **MERGIM BERISHA** swapped Augsburg for Hoffenheim for £12m, and USA striker **JORDAN PEFOK** joined Borussia Monchengladbach on a season-long loan from Union Berlin.

FABIAN RIEDER left Young Boys in Switzerland to join Rennes for £12.8m, while **PSG** signed highly-rated forward **BRADLEY BARCOLA** from Lyon for €45m. Meanwhile **FOLARIN BALOGUN**, who hit 21 Ligue 1 goals last season at Reims, joined Monaco from Arsenal for £34m.

Dinamo Zagreb had something of a fire sale, with **LUKA IVANUSEC** joining Feyenoord for €8.5m and **DOMINIK LIVAKOVIC** joining Fenerbahce.

There were more late moves in Turkey with Galatasaray snapping up Tottenham duo **DAVINSON SANCHEZ** (£8.1m) and **TANGUY NDOMBELE** (loan), Besiktas signing **ERIC BAILLY** from Manchester United and Trabzonspor capturing **NICOLAS PEPE** from Arsenal.

Anderlecht completed the double signing of **KASPER SCHMEICHEL** (Nice) and **THORGAN HAZARD** (Dortmund), **OWEN WIJNDAL** joined Antwerp from Ajax and **STEVEN ALZATE** was loaned to Standard Liege from Brighton.

See page 20 for deadline-day deals

AFRICA

Manchester United goalkeeper **ANDRE ONANA** reversed his decision to retire from international football after being recalled for Cameroon's crunch AFCON 2023 qualifier against Burundi.

ASIA

Saudi Arabian side Abha snapped up Cameroon international **KARL TOKO EKAMBI** from Lyon, Al Shabab agreed to sign **YANNICK CARRASCO** from Atletico Madrid, and Al Nassr signed Spain defender **AYMERIC LAPORTE** from Manchester City for £23.6m.

Continuing in the Saudi Pro League and **GEORGINIO WIJNALDUM** joined Al Ettifaq, with Steven Gerrard also signing **DEMARAI GRAY** from Everton, while another SPL deadline-day signing saw Al Ittihad splash out £21.4m to land **LUIZ FELIPE** from Real Betis.

Former France striker **BAFETIMBI GOMIS** joined J. League giants Kawasaki Frontale, while ex-Spain midfielder **JUAN MATA** also moved to Japan, signing for Vissel Kobe – both had left Galatasaray.

In Qatar, Al Arabi signed **MARCO VERRATTI** from PSG for a reported €45m, while Al Duhail signed **PHILIPPE COUTINHO** on loan from Aston Villa.

Saudi Arabia appointed **ROBERTO MANCINI** as national team head coach.

ALEN STAJCIC took charge of Perth Glory in the A-League after he parted ways with the Philippines Women's team.

CONCACAF

Following some standout displays during the Leagues Cup for Queretaro, forward **ANGEL SEPULVEDA** sealed a $2.7m move to LigaMX rivals Cruz Azul, while Juarez completed the double signing of **DIEGO VALOYES** and **MICHAEL SANTOS** from Talleres.

Mexico winger **JESUS "TECATITO" CORONA** returned home, joining

"Father, coach, teacher. Simply, Carlo Mazzone. Eternally grateful, Mister"

Francesco Totti pays tribute to Carlo Mazzone, the coach who helped launch the Roma legend's career

Monterrey from Sevilla for £3m, while Tigres UANL completed the signing of **MARCELO FLORES** from Arsenal.

In MLS, Czech Republic goalkeeper **TOMAS VACLIK** joined New England Revolution from Huddersfield Town.

SOUTH AMERICA

Four-and-a-half-years after leaving for Atlanta United, **PITY MARTINEZ** re-joined River Plate from Al Nassr on a free transfer. River also signed Uruguay U20 defender **SEBASTIAN BOSELLI** from Defensor for £3.4m. Meanwhile Ecuador forward **DJORKAEFF REASCO** swapped Newell's Old Boys for Instituto.

In Brazil, **DIEGO COSTA** signed for Botafogo after his release by Wolves, **ALFREDO MORELOS** moved to Santos following his Rangers exit, while Algeria striker **ISLAM SLIMANI** joined Coritiba.

Appointments, sackings and loans

OUT

Sacked...Hansi Flick

Brazil exit...Sundhage

EUROPE

HANSI FLICK became the first-ever Germany national team coach to be sacked following the 4-1 loss to Japan.

After Villarreal and Lyon's poor starts to the season, **QUIQUE SETIEN** and **LAURENT BLANC** respectively were relieved of their coaching duties.

Hibernian sacked manager **LEE JOHNSON**, while **SCOTT BROWN** was fired by EFL side Fleetwood Town.

World Cup winner **ALEJANDRO "PAPU" GOMEZ** was released by Sevilla after an injury-hit 2022-23.

VERA PAUW left her role as coach of the Republic of Ireland Women's team after her contract expired, while **HEGE RIISE** exited Norway's Women after less than 13 months in charge.

ASIA

MOUSSA MAREGA became a free agent after leaving Saudi side Al Hilal, while **MAROUANE FELLAINI** announced he will be leaving Shandong Taishan at the end of the season after five years in the Chinese Super League.

CONCACAF

BRUCE ARENA resigned as boss of Major League Soccer outfit New England Revolution, while **JOHN HERDMAN** left his role as Canada head coach. Herdman is due to take charge of Toronto FC from October 1.

SOUTH AMERICA

PIA SUNDHAGE stepped down as head coach of the Brazil Women's team after their disappointing group-stage exit at the World Cup.

OBITUARIES

Carlo MAZZONE (1937-2023)
"Carletto" oversaw 900 games in charge of various clubs in Italy, including Ascoli, Fiorentina, Lecce, Bologna, Brescia and his beloved Roma, where he also began his career as a player in the 1950s.

Tribute...Roma pay their respects to Mazzone

Kalman GERENCSERI (1945-2023)
Having made his Ligue 1 debut at the age of 15 in August 1960, the ex-Lens and Auxerre midfielder remains the youngest player in French top-flight history.

Bobby NOBLE (1945-2023)
A full-back in the Manchester United side that won the league title in 1967, Noble's career was ruined by injuries sustained in a car crash just before Matt Busby's side lifted the title.

Bertrand MARCHAND (1953-2023)
French-born coach who won the African Champions League in 2007 with Tunisia's Etoile Sahel. Played most of his career as an offensive midfielder at Rennes, before coaching Guingamp between 2002 and 2004. Was briefly Tunisia coach in 2010, with his last job at Club Africain last year.
Mark Gleeson

Andy RANKIN (1944-2023)
Former goalkeeper for Everton, Watford and Huddersfield Town, who made over 300 appearances for the Hornets.

Waldemar VICTORINO (1952-2023)
Striker who scored 15 goals in 33 games for Uruguay between 1976 and 1981, and hit the winner for Nacional v Nottingham Forest in the 1980 Intercontinental Cup.

Joe CAVEN (1936-2023)
Strong centre-forward who scored 57 goals in 105 games for Airdrieonians and 30 goals in 64 games for Morton.

Gilberto HERNANDEZ (1997-2023)
Panama defender who was tragically shot and killed at the age of 26.

Marchand...in the dugout as coach of Tunisia in 2010

Fulham favourite...Al Fayed guided the club to the Premier League

John CODDINGTON (1937-2023)
Uncompromising defender who played over 350 games for Huddersfield Town.

Mohammed HABIB (1949-2023)
Former India captain who won bronze at the 1970 Asian Games. Played for Mohun Bagan against Pele's New York Cosmos in 1977, scoring in a 2-2 draw.

Brian SNOWDON (1935-2023)
Centre-half who played for Blackpool, Portsmouth and Millwall, as well as Detroit Cougars in the United States.

Francesco SCORSA (1946-2023)
Former defender who notably played over 200 league games for Ascoli.

Alec JACKSON (1937-2023)
Winger who scored 52 goals in 208 games for West Bromwich Albion between 1954 and 1964, before also playing for Birmingham and Walsall.

Mohamed AL FAYED (1929-2023)
Egyptian businessman who was the chairman and owner of Fulham between 1997 and 2013.

"It is a very delicate situation to trivialise this issue… Obviously, we can only talk about football…He is a footballer of a very high level, who arrives at Getafe with enormous enthusiasm"

Getafe coach Jose Bordalas on the controversial signing of Mason Greenwood on loan from Manchester United

SUMMER 2023 TRANSFER WINDOW

DEADLINE DAY DEALS

£76.4m	**Randal KOLO MUANI**	*(Eintracht Frankfurt, Ger, to PSG, Fra)*
£53m	**Matheus NUNES**	*(Wolves, Eng, to Manchester City, Eng)*
£47.5m	**Brennan JOHNSON**	*(Nottingham Forest, Eng, to Tottenham, Eng)*
£40m	**Cole PALMER**	*(Manchester City, Eng, to Chelsea, Eng)*
£34.2m	**Ryan GRAVENBERCH**	*(Bayern Munich, Ger, to Liverpool, Eng)*
£30m	**Ibrahim SANGARE**	*(PSV, Ned, to Nottingham Forest, Eng)*
£22m	**Alex IWOBI**	*(Everton, Eng, to Fulham, Eng)*
£12.8m	**Jean-Ricner BELLEGARDE**	*(Strasbourg, Fra, to Wolves, Eng)*
£12.8m	**Nicolas DOMINGUEZ**	*(Bologna, Ita, to Nottingham Forest, Eng)*
£12.8m	**Hirving LOZANO**	*(Napoli, Ita, to PSV, Ned)*
£11m	**Andrew OMOBAMIDELE**	*(Norwich City, Eng, to Nottingham Forest, Eng)*
£10m	**Cesar MONTES**	*(Espanyol, Spa, to Almeria, Spa)*
£8.5m	**Anton STACH**	*(Mainz, Ger, to Hoffenheim, Ger)*
£7m	**Odysseas VLACHODIMOS**	*(Benfica, Por, to Nottingham Forest, Eng)*
£6.9m	**Borna SOSA**	*(Stuttgart, Ger, to Ajax, Ned)*
£6.4m	**Abde EZZALZOULI**	*(Barcelona, Spa, to Real Betis, Spa)*
£6.4m	**Niels NKOUNKOU**	*(Saint-Etienne, Fra, to Eintracht Frankfurt, Ger)*
£5m	**Callum HUDSON-ODOI**	*(Chelsea, Eng, to Nottingham Forest, Eng)*
£4.3m	**Altay BAYINDIR**	*(Fenerbahce, Tur, to Manchester United, Eng)*
£4m	**Rob HOLDING**	*(Arsenal, Eng, to Crystal Palace, Eng)*
Undisc.	**Adil AOUCHICHE**	*(Lorient, Fra, to Sunderland, Eng)*
Free	**Luka JOVIC**	*(Fiorentina, Ita, to Milan, Ita)*
Free	**Leonardo BONUCCI**	*(Juventus, Ita, to Union Berlin, Ger)*
Free	**Vicente GUAITA**	*(Crystal Palace, Eng, to Celta Vigo, Spa)*
Free	**MARIANO Diaz**	*(Real Madrid, Spa, to Sevilla, Spa)*
Free	**Andy CARROLL**	*(Reading, Eng, to Amiens, Fra)*
Loan	**Davy KLAASSEN**	*(Ajax, Ned, to Internazionale, Ita)*
Loan	**Sofyan AMRABAT**	*(Fiorentina, Ita, to Manchester United, Eng)*
Loan	**Nuno TAVARES**	*(Arsenal, Eng, to Nottingham Forest, Eng)*
Loan	**Mike TRESOR**	*(Genk, Bel, to Burnley, Eng)*
Loan	**Eric GARCIA**	*(Barcelona, Spa, to Girona, Spa)*
Loan	**Boubakary SOUMARE**	*(Leicester City, Eng, to Sevilla, Spa)*
Loan	**Mason GREENWOOD**	*(Manchester United, Eng, to Getafe, Spa)*
Loan	**Divock ORIGI**	*(Milan, Ita, to Nottingham Forest, Eng)*
Loan	**Clement LENGLET**	*(Barcelona, Spa, to Aston Villa, Eng)*
Loan	**Armel BELLA-KOTCHAP**	*(Southampton, Eng, to PSV, Ned)*
Loan	**Remo FREULER**	*(Nottingham Forest, Eng, to Bologna, Ita)*
Loan	**Sergio REGUILON**	*(Tottenham, Eng, to Manchester United, Eng)*
Loan	**Joao FELIX**	*(Atletico Madrid, Spa, to Barcelona, Spa)*
Loan	**Fode BALLO-TOURE**	*(Milan, Ita, to Fulham, Eng)*
Loan	**Albert Sambi LOKONGA**	*(Arsenal, Eng, to Luton Town, Eng)*
Loan	**Ansu FATI**	*(Barcelona, Spa, to Brighton, Eng)*
Loan	**Joao CANCELO**	*(Manchester City, Eng, to Barcelona, Spa)*
Loan	**Japhet TANGANGA**	*(Tottenham, Eng, to Augsburg, Ger)*
Loan	**Neal MAUPAY**	*(Everton, Eng, to Brentford, Eng)*
Loan	**Taylor HARWOOD-BELLIS**	*(Manchester City, Eng, to Southampton, Eng)*
Loan	**Juan BERNAT**	*(PSG, Fra, to Benfica, Por)*
Loan	**Luis SINISTERRA**	*(Leeds United, Eng, to Bournemouth, Eng)*
Loan	**Jaidon ANTHONY**	*(Bournemouth, Eng, to Leeds United, Eng)*
Loan	**James McATEE**	*(Manchester City, Eng, to Sheffield United, Eng)*
Loan	**Duvan ZAPATA**	*(Atalanta, Ita, to Torino, Ita)*
Loan	**REINIER**	*(Real Madrid, Spa, to Frosinone, Ita)*
Loan	**Tommy DOYLE**	*(Manchester City, Eng, to Wolves, Eng)*
Loan	**Rafael BORRE**	*(Eintracht Frankfurt, Ger, to Werder Bremen, Ger)*
Loan	**Oscar ESTUPINAN**	*(Hull City, Eng, to Metz, Fra)*
Loan	**Shamar NICHOLSON**	*(Spartak Moscow, Rus, to Clermont, Fra)*
Loan	**Terence KONGOLO**	*(Fulham, Eng, to Rapid Vienna, Aut)*
Loan	**Diego MOREIRA**	*(Chelsea, Eng, to Lyon, Fra)*
Loan	**Kevin MBABU**	*(Fulham, Eng, to Augsburg, Ger)*

Matheus Nunes… the biggest Premier League deal of deadline day

Joao x2…Cancelo and Felix signed for Barcelona

Leonardo Bonucci… fresh challenge for the Italy captain

Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

Foden's time to shine

This is a crucial season for the Manchester City starlet

Phil Foden has five Premier League titles to his name, along with two FA Cups and four League Cups. He has won the Champions League too. He has made more than 220 appearances for Manchester City, scoring upwards of 60 goals, all by the age of 23.

This represents a formidable achievement, make no mistake – yet the curious truth also is that the proper football career of Foden is only just beginning.

A huge season lies ahead for him. A strong and widespread feeling is that now is the time for Foden to develop from a brilliantly skilful but sometimes peripheral star for Manchester City into an essential cog of their slick machine.

It is time to show why Pep Guardiola once described him as the most talented player he has ever worked with, a rare tribute given other names in the Pep pantheon such as Lionel Messi and Andres Iniesta.

It is time to prove his best position is at number ten, and to become the playmaker of one of the finest club sides that English football has ever seen. The season can finish, as well, with an opportunity to help the England men's team win a first major trophy since 1966.

The sense of a talent not fully realised is okay at the ages of 19, 20 or 21. When you reach 23, perhaps not. Superstars are always first-choice picks for a manager, whether club or country; they don't linger in the shadows waiting to fill holes in a team.

Foden must make the leap from prince to king.

Sometimes in sport, in life, you need a lucky break. Could that have happened for Foden courtesy of the long-term hamstring injury suffered by team-mate Kevin De Bruyne at the start of this campaign?

The Belgium maestro has been City's main playmaker during the past few years and his sustained excellence has effectively worked as a roadblock in Foden's path to playing in the central role that the young English prince most relishes.

Time to shine ...Phil Foden

"I always played in that role growing up," said Foden after impressing in the position during an early season win over Newcastle. "We have the best player in the world playing there, in Kevin De Bruyne, but with him out maybe that's why I got trusted there."

> "I always played in that role growing up. We have the best player in the world playing there, in Kevin De Bruyne, but with him out maybe that's why I got trusted there"
>
> **Foden on playing the number ten role**

Trust is the key word. Foden needs to prove that Guardiola can trust him. The former Barcelona coach has always talked a magnificent game about the young Englishman under his command. He refused to allow Foden to go out on loan as a teenager; he said the kid was too good for that, and would be better served receiving his football education within the City walls.

The lessons have been learned well enough. Foden moves like a ghost during games, timing his runs to perfection. He doesn't overdo the flicks and tricks and dribbles, offering substance over showmanship. The weight and angles of his passing have become sublime.

A month ago Guardiola said of Foden: "He has incredible ability between the lines. The way he turns and attacks the last lines is one of the best I have seen."

To outside observers the education of his player looks complete. Foden can and should be trusted to become City's playmaker. So, why does it seem like Guardiola is so reluctant to trust the young star he continually showers with public praise?

Perhaps it's just a matter of age.

It is worth saying that De Bruyne was 24 years old when he joined Manchester City, and is now 32 – which illustrates that Foden has many years ahead to enjoy as the playmaker of whichever team he happens to be employed by.

Foden would only be human, though, if he cast an envious eye at the way in which 20-year-old England team-mate Jude Bellingham has instantly been trusted with a crucial role in central midfield for his new club Real Madrid.

Patience can be a virtue. But the sense here is that Phil Foden has been waiting long enough to become the main man.

Italy

Controversy surrounds Roberto Mancini's departure and Luciano Spalletti's appointment as his replacement as Italy's head coach

The Italian football world was taken completely by surprise when Roberto Mancini, the man who led Italy to a memorable Euro 2020 triumph in England, resigned as national team boss in mid-August. Few observers had had any idea that Mancini was unhappy in the Italy job.

Mancini's resignation was a shock, given that his position had just been strengthened by the Italian Football Federation's (FIGC) decision to make him co-ordinator of the U21 and U20 sides, as well as the senior team. However, his decision quickly became the object of bitter controversy with Italian football media speculating that Mancini had quit in order to take a €25 million annual salary as head coach of Saudi Arabia.

In the days after his resignation, Mancini said that Saudi Arabia had had "nothing to with his decision". Yet, two weeks later, it was formally announced in Riyadh that Mancini had signed a deal with Saudi Arabia through to 2027.

All of this was hardly an elegant spectacle. In the meantime, however, Luciano Spalletti, the coach who won last season's Serie A title so spectacularly with Napoli, has been appointed as Mancini's successor.

Italy coach since 2018, 58-year-old Mancini replaced Gian Piero Ventura following Italy's failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup. Since then, he has taken the *Azzurri* on a helter-skelter ride that touched a remarkable high when winning the Euros, before the unexpected low of failing to qualify for a second consecutive World Cup.

That elimination, plus subsequent 2-1 defeats to England (in Euro 2024 qualifying) and Spain (in the Nations League finals), seem to have convinced Mancini that he had reached the end of the road. For all that, his five-year tenure in the job was one of the longest and most successful in Italian football history; he is the third longest-serving national coach behind two legendary World Cup winners, Vittorio Pozzo (1929-1948) and Enzo Bearzot (1975-1986). He ended his spell with 37 wins, 15 draws and nine defeats.

Mancini's replacement, Spalletti, had already sprung his own surprise by parting ways with Napoli just days after their thrilling title-winning season had ended. He had been scheduled to take a sabbatical for this new season; instead, he had to rush to take over Italy at the beginning of September, just ahead of two vital Euro 2024 qualifiers.

Ironically, this baptism of fire came against North Macedonia, the side that, of course, eliminated Italy from the 2022 World Cup play-offs last year. Reportedly, coach Mancini had wanted to resign after that elimination but had been persuaded to stay on by FIGC president Gabriele Gravina.

> Luciano Spalletti, the coach who won last season's Serie A title so spectacularly with Napoli, has been appointed as Mancini's successor

Unable to persuade him to stay on this time, Gravina opted for Spalletti, an obvious but largely convincing choice. Not only did Spalletti's impressive track record with Napoli, Internazionale, Roma and Zenit Saint Petersburg weigh heavily, but there was also the consideration that his dynamic 4-3-3 system and style of play may fit in well with the new-look, attacking football introduced by Mancini during his tenure.

Italy legend... Roberto Mancini

***Scudetto* winner...** Luciano Spalletti

Spalletti's contract runs through to 2026, but one small (or perhaps not small) detail remains. According to an agreement stipulated between Napoli and Spalletti this summer, the coach must pay a €3.25m penalty clause if he signs for any other Italian team this year. Such a "*penale*" (not an unusual thing for both players and coaches in Italy) was intended to stop Spalletti immediately joining one of Napoli's Serie A rivals. However, Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis insists that this clause applies to the Italian national team just as much as to a Serie A club. So, somebody, Spalletti or the federation, may have to pay up.

The FIGC has told *World Soccer* that this is an issue exclusively for Spalletti and Napoli to resolve, adding that there is no intention at this point for the federation to intervene. In the meantime, Spalletti is in charge of the team having been officially installed on September 2 at the Coverciano national training centre in Florence.

However, knowing the highly litigious nature of Italian life, this could yet end up in some sort of court, be it sports or state judiciary. In the end, the problem may be resolved with the help of sponsorship. In the meantime, the rise and rise of Luciano Spalletti continues.

Paddy Agnew

KI Klaksvik

The first-ever team from the Faroe Islands to compete in the group stage of a European competition

The small Faroe Islands fishing town of Klaksvik was far from an obvious destination to be generating football headlines across Europe this summer.

With a population of just 5,000 and from one of European football's genuine outposts, it is easy to see why opponents underestimated them. When Ferencvaros – Hungary's most successful club – were paired with KI Klaksvik in the Champions League first qualifying round with the winners to face Hacken of Sweden, their social media pages wrote: "The Swedish champions await us in the next round...because it is certain we are going through!"

After a scoreless draw on the Bordoy island – in the northeast of the Faroes – it was widely expected that Ferencvaros would complete the job in Budapest, but they crashed to a shock 3-0 defeat in the eye-catching result of the round. After Hacken played out a similarly goalless draw away from home, surely they would have learned from the Hungarians' premature joy? Not quite. The Swedish champions posted online: "Now we will secure the victory at home next week." A pulsating 3-3 thriller preceded KI progressing on penalties.

That result sealed history: KI secured a place in the group stage of European competition. They would have two more rounds of qualification to come, but even two defeats would place them in the Europa Conference League groups. While the rest of the continent – and especially Ferencvaros and Hacken – looked on in awe, there was little surprise within the club. Their relegation in 2009 rocked KI, but the game-changing moment came five years later when Mikkjal Thomassen was appointed coach. "Our ambition from that point was to achieve the impossible," the club's press officer Solby Anna Christiansdottir explains. "We were aiming for a European group stage."

Four years after Thomassen's appointment, they won their first league title in two decades. In the 2020-21 season, they were edged out of the Europa League group stage with a play-off defeat to Dundalk. Two more league titles followed including last season when they went undefeated, collecting a league record 77 points from a possible 81. Another title is likely to follow this campaign, with 17 wins from their first 19 games – and just two league defeats since November 2020.

Underdogs... KI Klaksvik players celebrate during their victory over Ferencvaros

Klaksvik is the fishing capital of the Faroes, with a small but fiercely working-class population that has a true affinity to football. Their main rivals are HB and B36, clubs from the capital Torshavn – 40km and several islands to the south, where KI had to play their European matches after the first two rounds due to UEFA regulations.

Thomassen is no longer coach; he was replaced by former Norway international and Molde icon Magne Hoseth last year. Ironically, Norwegian champions Molde were next up for KI and for the first time in the run, the Faroese side won their "home" leg with a stunning 2-1 victory. An admirable display in Norway saw a tight game go to extra-time, when KI's Champions League run finally came to an end, setting them up with a clash against Moldovan champions FC Sheriff in the Europa League play-offs.

> Klaksvik is the fishing capital of the Faroes, with a small but fiercely working-class population that has a true affinity to football

Like in their previous ties against Ferencvaros and Hacken, KI drew the first leg (1-1) but this time were unable to repeat their second-leg heroics and bowed out with a 2-1 defeat in Tiraspol. Nonetheless, an historic Europa Conference League group stage now awaits.

KI have players from Nordic neighbours Norway, Denmark and Sweden, but also from Serbia, Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Yet their core is local, part-time players. Arni Frederiksberg makes a living selling, among other things, Norwegian frozen pizza in the Faroes. He hit six goals across their Champions League qualifying ties. Defensive regulars Odmar Faero and Borge Petersen work at a boat repair company, captain Jakup Andreasen completed his apprenticeship as an electrician and, perhaps most intriguingly, Swedish goalkeeper Jonatan Johansson played as a central defender at Stjordals in Norway's fifth tier last season before reverting back to his goalkeeping position.

Star striker Pall Klettskard – who has a prolific record on the domestic scene – missed all their Champions League games through injury, but his return will be key. As for playing in Torshavn, Christiansdottir explains this is not an issue. "The locals always support and help the club in any way they can," she explains. "We have had historic moments in this stadium, like when we beat Dinamo Tbilisi 6-1 in 2020."

While rivalries with the capital duo exist domestically, the Faroes are such a small country that European successes bring unity. "We have 18 islands and just 53,000 inhabitants, so everyone celebrates with you when you do well internationally," Christiansdottir states. "So, I think it is safe to say that KI has got fans from across the Faroes in Europe."

As for their upcoming Conference League opponents – Slovan Bratislava, Lille and Olimpija Ljubljana – they surely cannot be as complacent as Ferencvaros and Hacken, yet KI will secretly be hoping they fall into the same trap.

Colin Millar

Santi Cazorla

The Spanish magician returns to his hometown club to finally fulfil a lifetime ambition

"This is the dream I had when I was a child," Santi Cazorla said. Now 38, the former Arsenal midfielder has played 768 professional games across three countries, spent a decade in the national team, won (and scored) at Wembley in the FA Cup final, and was twice a European champion with *that* Spain team. He came back from the injury that might have not just cost him his career but his leg, returning two years after doctors told him he should have settled for being able to walk round the garden, but there was one thing he hadn't done and he wasn't going to retire until he did.

"I have dreamed many times of making my debut for Real Oviedo. It's an image that goes through your mind a lot," Cazorla said. Now, at last, it will be a reality; he will play for his local club, the club he supports and the one he joined 30 years ago but where he never reached the first team. Never mind that they're in the second division – bottom, in fact, at the time of writing – and haven't been in the top flight for 22 years, he was determined to go home, for his son Enzo to see him play in blue. He had come for one reason, he said: "sentiment."

Before signing for Oviedo, he made just two demands: firstly, that they pay him the minimum salary – just over €90,000 – and that they kept all his image rights. And secondly, that ten per cent of all sales of his shirt went directly to the club's academy.

Homecoming...Cazorla's presentation inside the Carlos Tartiere Stadium
Credit: Real Oviedo

> "This is the dream I had when I was a child...I have dreamed many times of making my debut for Real Oviedo"
>
> **Santi Cazorla**

No.8...Cazorla's new shirt number at Real Oviedo
Credit: Real Oviedo

Dream fulfilled ...Santi smiles
Credit: Real Oviedo

Oviedo's president Martin Pelaez called it the biggest deal he had ever done. He also called it the simplest. "When a player of Santi's stature renounces everything, it's easy," Pelaez said. "He could be somewhere else earning lots of money, he could be at any team, but he wanted to be here. We're only giving him a salary because we have to by league rules." In negotiations – if they can be called that – Cazorla told them just having the chance to play for Oviedo was payment enough. The question really was convincing them, not him.

"Lots of people may think I have nothing to gain and a lot to lose, but it's the complete opposite," he said. "When you're a nine-year-old with a dream, and you get the chance, you have to take it."

Born in Fonciello, seven miles from Oviedo's old Carlos Tartiere ground where he was a ball boy, Cazorla joined the club at nine. He progressed through the youth system but only ever played one game in their new ground by the

Omer Atzili

The Israel international becomes the first Jewish Israeli player to join an Arab club

same name. That was in June 2003, playing for the B team in front of 100 people. Oviedo B lost 3-1 and soon Cazorla was gone. He was 18.

Oviedo's first team, who had already gone down from La Liga in 2001, were relegated two divisions in one go that same summer. On the pitch, they went from the second division to the regionalised, 80-team – and theoretically amateur – Segunda B. Off the pitch, they were punished for the financial crisis that had seen players formally report the club for non-payment of salaries and relegated another division to the Tercera Division, where 350 clubs play on grounds that were often no better than park pitches.

Threatened with going out of business, Oviedo lost the support of the local council, who saw the club as a lost cause and proposed winding it up entirely. They had to be rescued by their fans in 2003 and again in 2012. The B teams were shelved and Cazorla, who had mostly been playing for the Under-19s, was forced to move on. He went to Villarreal, and the rest is history.

It is some history too, but Cazorla was an Oviedo fan and he felt his was not complete. He always planned to retire at home but the opportunity kept refusing to present itself. Stuck in Qatar, for the last two seasons, this summer at last he was liberated.

Turning 39 in December, it is later than he would have liked but he had to try. The video the club produced to announce his return home featured a small child stopping him as he rode a horse, like a wizard in a scene from Tolkien. "It's never late when you have a lot to give back," he replies.

He was still maybe a month from actually playing, but the impact was immediate. Shirts sales with his No.8 on the back went through the roof. Ticket sales for their first home game rocketed too – and all he was going to do that day was stand and wave at them. It was enough for them just to see him smile, to see him home.

"I'm still struggling to take it all in," Cazorla said. "Until you experience it you don't realise what all this means. I don't think I deserve so much love."

Sid Lowe

Trailblazing talent... Omer Atzili after beating Juventus in last season's Champions League

All the West Asian focus in the summer was on the start of the Saudi Arabian league season on August 11, but a week later the United Arab Emirates kicked off their campaign with some very interesting new signings of their own; not least that of Omer Atzili. The attacker has made headlines before, on and off the pitch, and is now in the international public eye like never before as the first Jewish player from Israel to join a club in the Arab world.

On August 18 he made his competitive debut, playing 88 minutes of the opening game of the season; his new club, last year's runners-up Al Ain, came back from a goal down to defeat Bani Yas 3-2.

Atzili has joined one of West Asia's biggest and most storied clubs – the first-ever winners of the Asian Champions League back in 2002-03 – although competing with the big-spending Saudi clubs in this year's edition is going to be far from easy. But the winger does have experience of helping smaller teams defeat continental giants: in October 2022, he scored both goals as Maccabi Haifa beat Juventus 2-0 in the group stage of the UEFA Champions League.

In terms of attacking threat, the two-time Israeli Footballer of the Year should take Al Ain, based in the pleasant city near the Oman border and quite different to the glamorous international hubs of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, to the next level.

Israel has had a troubled relationship with many of its Arab neighbours, who regard the country, which came into existence in 1948, as an illegal occupier of Palestinian lands. Football has been no different; in 1974, Israel was kicked out of the Asian Football Confederation after years of neighbouring countries refusing to take the same field.

The situation has changed somewhat. This move was made possible by the Abraham Accords, a series of normalisation agreements signed in 2020 between Israel on one side and Bahrain and the UAE on the other. This meant that the two Arab nations recognised the state of Israel and diplomatic relations were established.

Just a month later, Dia Saba, an Arab Muslim Israeli, signed for Al Nasr and had two solid seasons for the club, but Atzili is the first Jewish person from the country.

There is no doubt that he has what it takes to succeed on the pitch, the question is what will happen off it. The UAE league is usually a fairly gentle affair in terms of atmospheres and rivalries and it may well be that the fiercest criticism will come from observers in Palestine and those around the region that hold the cause close to their hearts. There have been editorials in Lebanese newspapers, for example, that have openly opposed the move.

> In terms of attacking threat, the two-time Israeli Footballer of the Year should take Al Ain to the next level

There have been reports, however, that Al Ain have registered him as Romanian, taking advantage of a European passport. It has also been suggested that he may not travel to other countries in the region for Asian Champions League games. This remains to be seen.

John Duerden

Bozsik Arena... Honved's stadium was built in 2021

eye witness

Peterjon Cresswell reports

HUNGARY

Reviving Honved, preserving Kispest

Right beside Honved's new Bozsik Arena in south Budapest, lifelong fan Istvan Gazso draws an imaginary line. "It was here," he says, delineating the exact space around him, "where the house was". He and his fellow supporters who run the independent club museum should know, for they used satellite imagery to detect the exact location of the long-demolished childhood home of Ferenc Puskas and his best friend Jozsef Bozsik, stars of the legendary Honved side of the 1950s.

Many talk about Celtic's triumphant "Lisbon Lions" team of 1967 being born within 30 miles of the stadium – at Honved, it's measured in metres.

Healthy crowds...Honved remain well supported even in the second tier

As Gazso explains during a later tour of the Kispest Football House three tram stops away, nine first-team players, Puskas included, and six reserves grew up in a block of 32 flats. They were all from the surrounding community of Kispest, whose namesake team was commandeered by the army ("honved') under the Communist restructuring of sport in 1949. While most call the club Honved, for locals it's still Kispest. Able to press gang the best players in the country, Honved provided most of the Hungary XI that famously thrashed England 6-3 in 1953.

Typified by the cunning Puskas drag-back to outwit the English defence, Hungary played a different game that day, one that enabled them to later beat the same once-feared opponent 7-1 in Budapest. "They were football's first real superstars," says Gazso. "Honved played club games at bigger stadiums, at Ferencvaros and the Nepstadion. They were no longer in Kispest." Pretty soon, Puskas was no longer in Hungary, staying abroad during the 1956 Uprising while Bozsik went home. While the "Galloping Major" found glory at Real Madrid, Bozsik was a hero in his own backyard behind the Iron Curtain.

Back at the contemporary Bozsik Arena, another line appears, Gazso and friends joining the long queue waiting to get in to see a midweek fixture against Tiszakecske. Relegated in 2023 for only the second time in the club's gilded history, Honved must now overcome a string of teams with unpronounceable names, and a couple of sleeping giants with bigger budgets, in order to re-join the elite. Last season, when Honved went down, they also provided seven of Hungary's Under-21 squad. Here in Kispest, the future can't come quick enough.

Support certainly hasn't wavered, with healthy (and loud) crowds by Hungarian second-tier standards, and away trips in significant numbers to far-flung destinations. There's something else going on, too. This evening, seven of Honved's starting line-up are aged 21 or younger, as are three of the five substitutes. This is where Peter Feher comes in. Hungarian by name and ethnicity, Honved's technical director Feher grew up in Denmark where he was involved in the rise of Nordsjaelland, title winners in 2011-12.

Feher's office overlooks the training complex at the impressive Honved academy near the Bozsik Arena. "I had almost every role at Nordsjaelland," he says. "In 2006, I was one of the key members in building the academy at the club. My thing was to play out from the back and high pressing. In this way, we put players in stressful situations. We need them to be able to make the right decisions on the pitch. It was a kind of natural selection – who can deal with these situations? You create an environment that develops and chooses the players, and that comes through certain values and a clear style of play, with big challenges attached.

> "We need Kispest to be solid red and black, to get that old spirit back"

"When I was technical director at Nordsjaelland, we brought through the first young group, players like Mathias Jensen, now at Brentford. Because we felt that they needed an extra year, we put them into the first-team squad. I think around 2014-15, we had the youngest team in Europe. And that's how the whole model started that was later sold to the Right to Dream."

After the Ghana-based academy took over Nordsjaelland, Feher worked around the Baltic before coming to Honved earlier this year. Fluent in both Hungarian and football, he knows his is a long-term strategy, outlined in his thick printed guide "Style of Play" handed out to all coaches at the club. It complements the four watchwords written large in Hungarian on the academy walls ("Unity", "Vocation", "Passion" and "Bravery"), another Feher initiative.

"One of my big things was not to bring Danish football here, but to develop Hungarian football. If we're just talking about winning, then we're taking the discussion where it's not meant to be, it's too low-level. Football is a game. And the premise of a game is winning. It's implicit. Obviously, you play to win. So, we should talk about strategy, because that's the interesting thing. How are we going to win? When we talk about developing the players, we talk about how to win. There are certain steps. So not winning at any cost, but how to win. It's the how that's important.

"Rather than formations, we look at the principles. The basics. Football is about creating space. That's never going to disappear. It's about width in the game, depth in the game, how do I create space, which spaces do I use – the

Magic Magyars...seven members of the Hungary side that won at Wembley played for Honved

Fanatical fans... Honved supporters celebrate at the old Bozsik Jozsef Stadion in 2018

understanding of spaces. We cannot invent football. We need to respect football."

Helping him in this task is Barney Lord, head of performance at Honved. "Twenty years ago, there were only [specialist] goalkeeping coaches. Now sports science is across the board," says the likeable Mancunian, who started out at Sheffield United's pioneering academy of the early 2000s. He came to Budapest when the then-Blades owner Kevin McCabe was expanding his football empire. "At the time, Ferencvaros had no one in my position. Now it's a given at Hungary's top clubs."

Here at Honved, Lord's job is to "squeeze out that one per cent" for players to reach the top level. The club has 120 live-in teenagers on its books, whose sleep, diet and training are carefully monitored. They also complete their regular education here, with five hours a day of schoolwork, interspersed with activity in the gym and on the pitch. "You're trying to deliver your knowledge and your experience to kids who also need to learn their own lessons, so that they can fulfil their potential. We're looking to produce players for the European elite."

This is not Hungary's only academy, of course – a smaller one in Szekesfehervar generated new Liverpool star Dominik Szoboszlai, who is "creating the footsteps for Hungarian kids to follow in," according to Lord. Feher is well aware that Honved may not be every parent's first choice for their talented offspring: "We go out around Kispest and try to ensure that the good young players come here, that they don't go to MTK or Ferencvaros. We go to schools – we need to focus on this area, to introduce kids to the club."

Gazso agrees. "When you walk around Ujpest, the first thing you see is lilac," he says, referring to Ujpest FC's club colours, which are worn by every other local and splashed across the walls there. "We need Kispest to be solid red and black, to get that old spirit back."

Against Tiszakecske, Zalan Kerezsi, just turned 20, outfoxes the visitors' defence to set up Dominik Kocsis (just turned 21) for the first of two goals in a 2-1 win. A few days later, lack of experience and concentration sees Honved succumb to hosts Siofok by the same scoreline, played before more visiting supporters than home ones. It's going to be a long season. Feher puts a three to five-year time frame on seeing his plans come to fruition, but Honved need to achieve promotion now.

"Every club with some kind of history has some kind of pressure," says Feher. "In Denmark, the top clubs – FC Copenhagen, Nordsjaelland and FC Midtjylland – have relatively short histories, so they can change their thoughts and ideas right away. Here we have a big history, we have a legacy, but I look at that in a positive way, that we should come back to our roots with this attacking mindset. What the Hungarians invented back then, [Pep] Guardiola's Manchester City now use. They had this inventive style and way of football thinking. When we talk about the 1950s, we're talking about attacking football, cunning football, and that's what we need to bring back to Honved. That's the road we've started on, to develop a brand. Right now, we are in second-tier NBII, but I can see our future as a Central European club, producing and selling players for good money. I always say my dream is to create a Central European Ajax."

Club legends... portraits of Ferenc Puskas and Jozsef Bozsik in the club museum

eyewitness

Henry Flynn reports

ARGENTINA

Football at the end of the world

Venture far enough, way down from Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Rosario and the other major Argentinian cities, and you'll reach the end of the world. Or, as some know it, the beginning of everything.

Located near South America's tip, Ushuaia is the southernmost city on the planet and closer to Antarctica than Argentina's capital. And those arriving from the country's north can only get there by crossing the icy waters linking the Pacific and Atlantic oceans through neighbouring Chile.

Argentina's serene Tierra del Fuego region, around 6,000km from the equator, is home to glacial landscapes, penguin colonies and some of the longest nights on Earth. It doesn't quite evoke Diego Maradona, Lionel Messi and celebratory *Albiceleste* fans parading through sun-kissed streets – as they did after the nation's World Cup triumph last year.

Instead, it's an outpost – a hinterland and final stop for many visitors. But for natives, such as those engaged in football, it also represents a curious starting point.

Removed from River Plate, Boca Juniors, Racing, Independiente, San Lorenzo and the professional giants elsewhere, the area hosts smaller amateur teams. However, some have designs on climbing the football pyramid and becoming relevant in the football-crazy country.

With ten league titles and experience playing in national competitions, Los Cuervos del Fin del Mundo – or, the Ravens from the End of the World – is the most successful team in the region. Then there are local challengers Lasserre, Camioneros de Ushuaia and Camioneros de Rio Grande, with the latter based slightly further north.

Not in a position to compete for first or second-division honours – or sell money-making talents ▸

to top European clubs – sides must earn their stripes by battling on the tundra turf first. Only upon reaching a nationwide tournament, with over 200 teams from various regions, can the provincial names even dream about winning a golden ticket to Argentina's third tier – an ordeal made all the more harder by geography.

"We play football on big pitches no more than six or seven months a year," says Liga Ushuaiense president Marcelo Gonzalez, speaking from his office. "The rest of the year is on synthetic pitches as the ice is dangerous for the players.

"The challenge with football here compared to the rest of the country is we're an amateur league and one of the last to form. It's been 15 years since the league's formation. They play about 95 per cent of the year in the rest of the country. We can't do that because the conditions don't allow it."

Given that South American league football originated in Argentina, it's taken a while to establish itself in every corner. Ushuaia's present division came to be in 2007, although organised competition began in 2003 – 112 years after the Primera Division first got underway.

While there are opportunities and prospects for young players arriving in Tierra del Fuego, it's a radical change from life up north – and it's more common for budding stars to leave if they wish to build a football career. Rodrigo Arciero, for instance, is one of a smattering of Ushuaia-born players to have played in Argentina's top flight in the last decade. The defender joined Boca Juniors' academy as a teenager and went on to play in the Primera for Patronato and Banfield. Now he plays in a more familiar climate, at Finnish side Inter Turku.

In reverse, aspiring goalkeeper Facundo Barros moved to the region last April to join his brother. The move took him to Lasserre, the side that won the Clausura (the closing half of the season common across the Americas) in 2022.

"At first, it's difficult to adapt," he says. "But after, you don't feel it much. In the arc, people suffer a bit more. We won 14-0 one day, and I was freezing.

"In terms of tradition, climate doesn't allow football to be hugely popular. Futsal is more popular because people can relax and not suffer from the cold.

"I would like to see a stadium with a roof one day. I think many more people would come, and it would increase the competitive level. The league isn't a high standard generally; there are four or five teams with a good squad, but the others don't match the standard."

Loyal support...fans of Camioneros de Ushuaia

Here, it's normal for squad members to juggle games with study or work in a local economy based on agriculture and tourism rather than big business. Semi-professionalism only kicks in at the national tournament level, where some players earn a football income while others still have only expenses paid. It's a far cry from Argentina's best-paid exports, such as Messi and his reported $60 million-a-year salary at Inter Miami, or Enzo Fernandez, whose £106.8m switch to Chelsea last January broke the Premier League transfer record.

Besides the inflated numbers characterising the modern game, there is the country itself. Wherever you go, capital cities are often home to multiple top-flight clubs. And that is especially true in Buenos Aires, where various sides bring fervent crowds on match days, none more so than derby

Football at the end of the world... a pitch in Ushuaia

day at River's electric Estadio Monumental or Boca's buzzing Bombonera.

"If you compare us with the teams in Buenos Aires, like Boca Juniors and River Plate, they have the highest potential in the country. They have more executive and economic power to help develop better players," Gonzalez explains. "There are smaller clubs here. Players and families work and help make contributions. These things make these tournaments happen. It's very amateur.

"Like every [domestic] league, AFA [Argentina's Football Association] helps us – with player wellbeing and such matters. It's a small league from the last city in the world, and we have nearly 5,000 people playing. That helps us. Everything is to help the clubs. We are fine overall."

With a population well under one million – a small fraction of the nation's 45 million-plus figure – following in their idols' footsteps is a tough ask for the region's youngsters. But for the households growing up watching Messi, Angel Di Maria and Alexis Mac Allister, there is still a pathway.

"If you're good and have discipline, you have a chance, wherever you are in Argentina," Barros continues. However, it's more difficult because there's so much competition in Buenos Aires or the central areas.

"If you lift one rock there [in Buenos Aires], three footballers spring from the ground. So, keeping an eye on the other regions is hard. Few people come because the football improves the closer you go to the capital."

There are some promising signs, however. Its futsal culture develops technical players comfortable in tight spaces – an excellent grounding for so many stars, past and present. The task is translating such qualities onto larger fields with snowfall and orange balls in winter.

One major positive for the association has been increased participation since the pandemic. By Gonzalez's metrics, it has more than quadrupled, going from approximately 1,200 to around 5,000.

Supporters also buy into the game, especially the squad representing everyone within the borders. From its Buenos Aires base, the national team brings everyone under the same roof, never mind the city, district or tribal club allegiances. Victory in Qatar was the prime example, as Gonzalez recalls.

> "If all goes well in the next ten years, we'll have clubs from Ushuaia competing nationally"
>
> **Liga Ushuaiense president Marcelo Gonzalez**

"The national team helps us as a country, uniting us. Something that brings us all together. There are very positive players, like Messi and his style. And with a coach [Lionel Scaloni] that almost nobody knew much about. It's something the whole country desired.

"Things were bad in almost everything. The football helped us work well and together. You sensed the team could go far in the second group game against Mexico. That we could win."

Regarding the attention towards the comparatively humbler action in Ushuaia and its surroundings, it's a quieter spectacle, apart from the crucial matches involving the best around. According to Barros, the climate means few fans attend nearby games, although Lasserre, for one, brings its people, music, trumpets and flags.

Raising the overall standard boils down to having the facilities and interest to counter harsher weather and make the most of a smaller population detached from mainland Argentina. And there are ways forward.

"The idea with synthetic pitches is to encourage young people. If all goes well in the next ten years, we'll have clubs from Ushuaia competing nationally," adds Gonzalez, the man with the plan.

"That's the proposal, to have players in big clubs like Boca and San Lorenzo, players with good contracts and salaries, and that we are a preference in the country. Or, at least, we have competitive teams. And when players leave the province, they can compete at the same level as those in other parts.

"In future years, we can hopefully play to June because we need that to play across the nation. We hope to qualify for more tournaments. Not immediately. We will have the infrastructure to do this in three or four years."

Seeing that Argentina will be reeling in its world champions status until at least 2026, here is an excellent moment to capitalise and strengthen everywhere. That a future dynamo comes from the country's outer reaches are slim, although there is now something to build on.

Champions...Lasserre celebrate with the 2022 Clausura trophy

Barros brothers...Facundo (left) and his brother

6 of the best

Ones to watch: Europa League

Nick Bidwell takes a closer look at six players who could have a big impact in this season's Europa League

1 Trent ALEXANDER-ARNOLD

LIVERPOOL

At the age of just 24, the Liverpool-born full-back already has amassed a lifetime of experience at the top table of European club football, clocking up over 50 games in the Champions League and appearing in no fewer than three finals in that competition. For most of his career to date, he has shone as a marauding right-back, gloriously inventive in everything he does. But his conversion to a new "quarterback-style" hybrid role, which allows him to drift into more central areas, makes total sense. He can be vulnerable defensively and was exceptional for the Reds in central midfield towards the end of last season, as well as for England during June's Euro 2024 qualifiers.

2 Houssem AOUAR

ROMA

This highly talented Algeria international, recently acquired by the *Giallorossi* on a free transfer from Lyon, very much has a point to prove in the Eternal City. Hampered by injuries last season, he went from OL golden boy to squad shadow in short order and now will be looking to hit the recovery trail at the Stadio Olimpico. Still only 25, he was extremely impressive for Roma in pre-season, not only showcasing his rare touch and vision, but mixing it up with great energy and pizzazz. Roma boss Jose Mourinho could even choose to deploy him as a false nine, though he is most likely to be the midfield playmaker which should prove a godsend to new striker Romelu Lukaku.

3 Matthias GINTER
FREIBURG

Now in his second stint with his hometown club, the Germany international centre-back – capped over 50 times for his country – is not just one of the best in his position in the Bundesliga. As the most experienced and decorated player in the Freiburg squad, the 29-year-old has another vital role to play – that of the elder statesman who always sets the right example. Ginter should be known as "Mr Reliable". Last season, he did not miss a single minute of the Black Forest club's domestic programme. Much more physical than he used to be and a menace when advancing for set-pieces.

4 Alex GRIMALDO
BAYER LEVERKUSEN

After two decades of trying and failing to find an adequate left-back/left wing-back, Bayer Leverkusen finally appear to have the remedy in the shape of the 28-year-old Spaniard, who arrived at the BayArena this summer on a Bosman free transfer from Portuguese champions Benfica. In contrast to so many wide pistons, the Barcelona academy graduate is not particularly quick over the ground. Yet more than compensates with his many strong suits: his outstanding technique, incisive passing, crossing accuracy and free-kick prowess. A proven supplier of goals and assists in his seven years and 300 plus games at Benfica.

5 LUIZ HENRIQUE
REAL BETIS

Left-footed Brazilian right-winger, 22, who can upset the most meticulous of defensive schemes with his speed, quick feet and penchant for popping up in the most unexpected of places in the attacking third. Bought from Rio club Fluminense last year for a cut-price €7 million, he was recently described by Brazil Under-20 coach Ramon Menezes as a "player with a brilliant future". His one major weakness is a lack of consistency, either in show-stopping form or struggling for inspiration. It will be interesting to see how he links up with new signing Isco, who looks to have been given the central playmaking brief following the summer departure of Sergio Canales to Monterrey in Mexico.

6 Pedro GONCALVES
SPORTING

No player is more important to the plans of Sporting coach Ruben Amorim than the former Wolverhampton Wanderers and Famalicao player, who can put on a masterclass in any number of positions: pushing forward with menace on either flank, turning goalscorer or providing balance in a deeper central midfield role. A great team man and more than happy to be the team's Swiss Army knife, "Pote" enjoyed a wonderful campaign last term, scoring 20 goals in all competitions and setting up another 15. The former Braga and Valencia youth player has a reported €80m release clause.

6 of the best

Ones to watch: Conference League

Nick Bidwell also picks out six players to keep an eye on in this season's Europa Conference League

1 Gift ORBAN

GENT

Squat, explosive Nigerian striker, who has not stopped breathing fire since arriving in Flanders from Norwegian side Stabaek early this year. Averaging a goal a game in his first 20 outings for Gent last season, he clearly likes to find the net in clusters, notably scoring seven times in the space of three days last March: four goals in a league victory at Zulte Waregem and a three-minute hat-trick in a Conference League win over Istanbul Basaksehir. Reportedly came close to leaving Gent this summer, with Tottenham among the interested parties. Rated in the €30m bracket, he is currently part of a gifted generation of Super Eagles forwards alongside the likes of Victor Osimhen, Taiwo Awoniyi, Victor Boniface, Kelechi Iheanacho, Moses Simon, Samuel Chukwueze and Terem Moffi.

2 Nicolas GONZALEZ

FIORENTINA

The Argentina winger certainly has high standards to maintain in the Conference League. In the same competition last season, the former Stuttgart ace was instrumental in Fiorentina's march to the final, posting five goals and three assists. Equally devastating on either flank, his sprinter speed, ability to slalom with the ball and sheer unpredictability makes him so difficult to pin down. When on top of his game he literally carries the *Viola*, however he does have a tendency to blow hot and cold – leading to some to suggest he would be better employed as a second striker. Was the subject of a £35m bid from Brentford earlier in the summer, which Fiorentina rejected out of hand, insisting he wasn't for sale.

3 Vangelis PAVLIDIS
AZ

AZ fans can only be relieved that their prolific Greek front-man did not, as widely expected, head for the exit door this summer. Pavlidis, who in his two years in Alkmaar has amassed 50 goals in all competitions, was heavily linked with Milan, Borussia Monchengladbach of the Bundesliga and leading Spanish outfits Villarreal and Sevilla. But apparently no one was prepared to meet AZ's asking price of €12m-€15m, a not unreasonable figure for someone with his eye for goal and a good track record as a provider of assists. Came through the youth ranks of Bochum in Germany.

4 Albert GRONBAEK
BODO/GLIMT

Dynamic and creative, the 22-year-old Danish midfielder has added goalscoring to his range these past few months, regularly on the scoresheet for his table-topping club in the Norwegian Eliteserien and thrice netting in Conference League qualification, including goals against Bohemians 1905 of the Czech Republic and Armenian outfit Pyunik. Spright, skilful and determined in box-to-box mode, he also has experience as a left-winger, often occupying that role at previous club AGF of Aarhus. Great in one-on-one situations and plays with a lot of heads-up awareness. A first senior cap for Denmark surely cannot be far away.

5 Benjamin ANDRE
LILLE

If an award existed for the most underrated player in Ligue 1, the Lille central midfielder and skipper would be a prime contender. Most unlikely to be lit up in neon, neither showy nor spectacular, the 33-year-old former Ajaccio and Rennes stalwart is the personification of quiet effectiveness, someone who oils the Lille machinery with his metronomic passing, strength in the tackle, wide-awake shielding of the back line and excellent leadership. Without fuss or ego, he creates the framework for others to perform, such as the team's attacking outlets Remy Cabella and Jonathan David. Lille coach Paulo Fonseca thinks it strange that Andre has never played for France.

6 Martin BATURINA
DINAMO ZAGREB

Brilliant young attacking midfielder, who enjoyed a wonderful first full season as a Dinamo pro last term, setting up goal upon goal as the Blues won yet another Croat league title, voted Young Player of the Year and earning a spot in the top-flight Best XI for 2022-23. Outstanding technically, upright and elegant, he boasts a wonderful range of pass, is sound in his decision-making and is very dangerous indeed when breaking forward from deep positions. Diminutive in stature, his low centre of gravity is a major asset, as is the threat he poses from a direct free-kick.

MADE FOR MUNICH

Harry Kane has wasted no time in settling in at his new German home

Words: Nick Bidwell

Only in a parallel universe will new Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane face the sort of Bundesliga wall of antagonism that awaited another England captain, Kevin Keegan, when the latter swapped Liverpool for Hamburg in the summer of 1977.

Keegan, then at the peak of his powers, should have been welcomed with open arms by the Hamburg dressing room. Yet instead found himself isolated, treated with scorn and envy by team-mates who, for the bulk of his first season at the Volksparkstadion, only passed to him under duress. Once the bad blood had subsided, Keegan would go on to become a legendary figure in northern Germany, an inspirational talisman as HSV won a pair of German league titles (although by their second crown in 1982 he had departed the club) and reached the 1980 European Cup final. Keegan ended up staying for three years, but easily could have walked within those first few months.

Kane, 30, should have no such problems fitting in at Bayern following his €110 million move, a record signing for the Allianz-Arena giants. Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel, as much fan as manager, will do everything in his power to make him feel at home. His new team-mates have already taken to the unassuming East Londoner, struck by his work ethic and unselfish style of play. Not a scintilla of resentment has been generated by Kane's status as the highest earner at the club (with a reported annual salary of £21.5m).

The long and short of it is that the Bayern camp are delighted to have him on board. Ever since Robert Lewandowski quit for Barcelona last year Bayern have lacked a genuine finisher, and the prolific Kane appears the ideal antidote. Little wonder Bayern were prepared to break the bank for him. Just look at his credentials: the second-highest goalscorer in the history of the Premier League (213), three seasons as the English top flight's leading marksman, top of the all-time England scoring charts and winner of the Golden Boot at the 2018 World Cup.

Before Kane arrived on the Spurs first-team scene a little more than a decade ago, no one would have thought it possible that Jimmy Greaves' record haul of 268 Tottenham goals would ever be matched. But Kane managed it, eventually breaking Greaves' record earlier this year.

MIA
SAN
MIA
FC BAYERN MÜNCHEN
9
KANE

Spurs legacy... a mural of Kane near the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium

Nor should Kane have any problem adjusting to the German style of play. The Bundesliga and Premier League have much in common: an abundance of end-to-end action, fast-paced transitions, defensive lines which sometimes are a shade too high and the physicality of duels. His brief at Bayern will not change one iota. He will be expected to operate as he did at Spurs, combining typical centre-forward presence in the box with a predilection for dropping deep and linking the play. Over the last four or five years, Kane has become decidedly more mobile and creative: almost 50 assists in the Premier League tells its own story.

On his Bundesliga debut for Bayern, a comfortable 4-0 victory at Werder Bremen, he wasted no time whatsoever in showcasing the full repertoire of a modern-day leader of the line. The game had barely begun when he set up Bayern's opening goal, slipping Leroy Sane through with a typically clever flick from inside his own half. Then, 70 minutes later, he got on the scoresheet himself, on hand to deliver an ice-cool finish to Alphonso Davies' cross.

"On the whole, he [Kane] will do us a lot of good," commented Bayern's Germany international midfielder Joshua Kimmich after the game. "That's because he's a player who, as well as scoring lots of goals, will take part in our build-up play. I'm sure our other attackers are going to benefit from him. He's not a striker who only receives the ball and looks to finish. As we saw with Leroy's goal, Harry looks to play team-mates in. Other players will have more room because the opposition will be focused on him and his great qualities."

After the best part of a decade headlining at Tottenham, Kane will, of course, have to make a certain number of adjustments in Germany. He needs to build up an understanding with his team-mates, do his homework on the pros and cons of defensive schemes in the Bundesliga, get to grips with a new football culture and to learn German, which is one tough language to master. Above all else, he has to deal with a completely new set of expectations.

Now ensconced as the most expensive signing in Bundesliga history, he simply has to deliver. Generally speaking, German lovers of the beautiful game have a soft spot for anything British. But there will be no hiding place for the England skipper if the goals do not flow for Bayern in sufficient numbers.

Welcome to Bavaria... Kane is unveiled to the Munich press

For all Tottenham Hotspur's prestige, historic honours board and membership of the Premier League "Big Six" club, Bayern Munich represent a different ball game altogether. In ten seasons in the Tottenham first team, Kane did not lay a hand on a single trophy; over the same period, Bayern gleaned no fewer than 23 titles.

Even when Spurs and Kane came within touching distance of silverware – finishing second in the 2016-17 Premier League, losing in the Champions League final to Liverpool in 2019 and twice losing League Cup finals in 2015 and 2021 – it was more a case of pleasant surprise than duty calls. At Bayern, on the other hand, winning is an obligation. And Kane will be expected to be front and centre of the sky-high aspirations: a domestic league and cup double and at least a place in the Champions League last four.

> "I'm sure our other attackers are going to benefit from him. He's not a striker who only receives the ball and looks to finish. As we saw with Leroy's goal, Harry looks to play team-mates in"
>
> **Bayern Munich midfielder Joshua Kimmich**

Never before has he had to live with such a success diktat at club level and he especially has to prove himself in the Champions League. While he has amassed an excellent 21 goals in 32 appearances in the competition, he was far from his best in Europe last season, only managing one goal for Spurs in eight starts.

There are bound to be times at Bayern when all does not go to plan, when the critics sharpen their knives or instigate a social media pile-on. But one thing we know about Harry Kane is his exceptional attitude, his absolute unwillingness to be discouraged, his humility and drive to continually improve. Should a speck of grit find its way into his mechanism at Bayern, he will react as he always does – by quietly knuckling down in search of a solution.

It's always been thus in his career: responding to the inevitable difficult moments with even greater determination. Whenever the gremlins have appeared – the seven-game goalscoring drought for England in 2018, or the six Premier League fixtures without a goal at the start of the 2021-22 campaign – his first counter-measure is to hang onto his unbreakable belief in his ability. No emotional extremes allowed.

As talented as they may be, many big-club academy graduates simply do not have the mental fortitude to take the next crucial steps. Too many expect stardom as a right and baulk at the idea of character-forming loan moves away from HQ. The teenage Kane, however, had the self-awareness and maturity not to be offended when Tottenham sent him on temporary assignments down the leagues at

Leyton Orient, Millwall, Norwich City and Leicester City between 2011 and 2013.

These experiences as a loanee proved to be a mixed bag for young Harry. Some were extremely rewarding, others much less so. But much more important to Kane was the big picture. Here was his opportunity to round out his sporting education, a muddy field learning curve where he would be out of his Tottenham comfort zone and be forced to confront a less refined style of play.

His first temporary mission, a six-month tour of duty at Leyton Orient in the second half of the 2010-11 season, was, on the whole, a positive one. He had plenty of first-team game time, making nine starts in League One and a further nine appearances as a substitute. He opened his pro scoring account with a five-goal deposit and generally impressed with his application, willingness to learn and ability to integrate. No one could say he was not prepared to put in the hard yards. In addition to his Orient commitments, he also regularly returned to Tottenham for extra training sessions.

Orient fans were treated to repeated touches of class, silky technique, intelligent movement, vision and his trademark modus operandi in the box, getting a shot off before a goalkeeper has time to set. The flip side of the coin was that he clearly lacked physical presence. He tended to be pushed off the ball a lot and in an attempt to circumvent the underwhelming tale of the tape, O's manager Russell Slade often used him in a withdrawn role behind a pair of strikers. A wise move and one which continues to benefit him to this day.

The teenage Kane, however, had the self-awareness and maturity not to be offended when Tottenham sent him on temporary assignments down the leagues at Leyton Orient, Millwall, Norwich City and Leicester City

In January 2012, Kane agreed to spend six months at second-tier Millwall, where he made 24 starts in all competitions, scoring nine goals. The crowd at The Den is notoriously hard to please, uncompromising, unforgiving and quick to make life hell for any player they do not rate. However Harry would win them over with his bravery, industry and single-mindedness. Forming an outstanding front-line partnership with Andy Keogh, Kane, still only 18, was the driving force of a late revival in which the Lions won five of their last six games, thus

Baby-faced... Kane in action for Leyton Orient

Lion's Den...one of Kane's nine goals for Millwall

avoiding the threat of a relegation dogfight. For his efforts, he was deservedly voted Millwall's Young Player of the Year.

Undoubtedly, the most difficult of his loan spells was at Norwich, the Premier League side he joined on transfer deadline day in August 2012. After shining in pre-season and making his Premier League debut for Spurs earlier that month, hopes were high at Carrow Road that the 19-year-old Kane would markedly boost their firepower. Sadly, the move failed to work out: Harry was sidelined for a couple of months with a broken metatarsal and failed to score in five first-team appearances. By early 2013, he had become the forgotten man at Norwich, with Spurs recalling him after an anti-climactic ending to his first real taste of the English top flight.

While a serious injury can happen to the best, with the benefit of hindsight,

Testing...Kane struggled on loan at Leicester City

the move to Norwich was perhaps not the wisest. At the time, Norwich had grown used to feeding an old-school up-and-at-'em-style centre-forward in Grant Holt. The more technical and cerebral Kane was very much a square peg in a round hole.

After returning to Tottenham, Kane soon would be sent out on loan again, joining Championship side Leicester City. There he would score twice in 14 games as the Foxes just missed out on promotion via the play-offs, but for the most part he served as bench-fodder. At Leicester and Norwich he looked anything but a megastar in the making.

Nonetheless, through sheer hard work and dedication, Kane had got to the brink of the Tottenham first team. What he really needed, though, was someone to believe in him. Crucially, he found that benefactor in December 2013 when Tim Sherwood replaced Andre Villas-Boas as Spurs manager. Four months later, in April 2014, he was handed his first Premier League start in a 5-1 victory over Sunderland, marking the event with his first Premier League strike. With two more goals in the next fortnight, he would remain in the Spurs first team until the end of the season.

Debut goal...Kane celebrates scoring in his first Bundesliga appearance

Now he was off and running.

"Tim knew what I could do," revealed Kane at the time. "I'd known him for a while and he'd seen me score goals before. He just told me to play my game, be confident and express myself. Even when I was out on loan I wanted to come back and play for Tottenham."

Sherwood, like his Tottenham successor Mauricio Pochettino, had a hunch that Harry Kane would come good. How right they were. The latter's diligence, loyalty, ambition and efficiency has paid off. In spades.

From the ***archives***

Back in March 2015, Kane was profiled by *World Soccer* after his rapid rise through the Tottenham ranks...

The Europa League may have yet to find a place in the hearts of most football supporters, but it has helped Tottenham to unearth their brightest young star for many years.

The plaudits have come thick and fast. Les Ferdinand, having observed Harry Kane at close quarters, believes "he can go right to the top."

"I would compare his football intelligence with Teddy Sheringham and his finishing with Alan Shearer," says Ferdinand.

"I worked with Harry when he was a young lad and could see straightaway that he was a goalscorer – left foot, right foot, head – he could finish any way you wanted."

Kane has to pinch himself sometimes that he has made such great strides in less than a year.

"2014 was a great year for me, you could say it was my breakthrough year," he says. "I got my chance at Spurs and was able to take it. It is certainly a year I won't forget. This season has been going well for me and hopefully I can continue in that vein of form."

A new five-and-a-half-year contract has also strengthened his commitment to Spurs. Talk of him being scouted by Real Madrid may sound fanciful, for now. But playing in the Europa League may be the least of Harry Kane's future worries if his rapid career rise continues.

Harry Kane

the numbers game

PREMIER LEAGUE GOLDEN BOOT WINNERS

- 2015-16 **HARRY KANE** *(Tottenham Hotspur)* **25 GOALS**
- 2016-17 **HARRY KANE** *(Tottenham Hotspur)* **29 GOALS**
- 2017-18 **MOHAMED SALAH** *(Liverpool)* **32 GOALS**
- 2018-19 **SALAH/MANE/AUBAMEYANG** *(Liverpool/Liverpool/Arsenal)* **22 GOALS**
- 2019-20 **JAMIE VARDY** *(Leicester City)* **23 GOALS**
- 2020-21 **HARRY KANE** *(Tottenham Hotspur)* **23 GOALS**

PFA TEAM OF THE YEAR

6 **Appearances in the PFA Team of the Year** *(2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2020-21 & 2022-23)*

PREMIER LEAGUE RECORD SCORERS

PLAYER	Goals
1 Alan **SHEARER**	260
2 Harry **KANE**	213
3 Wayne **ROONEY**	208
4 Andy **COLE**	187
5 Sergio **AGUERO**	184

ENGLAND

86 CAPS

59 GOALS

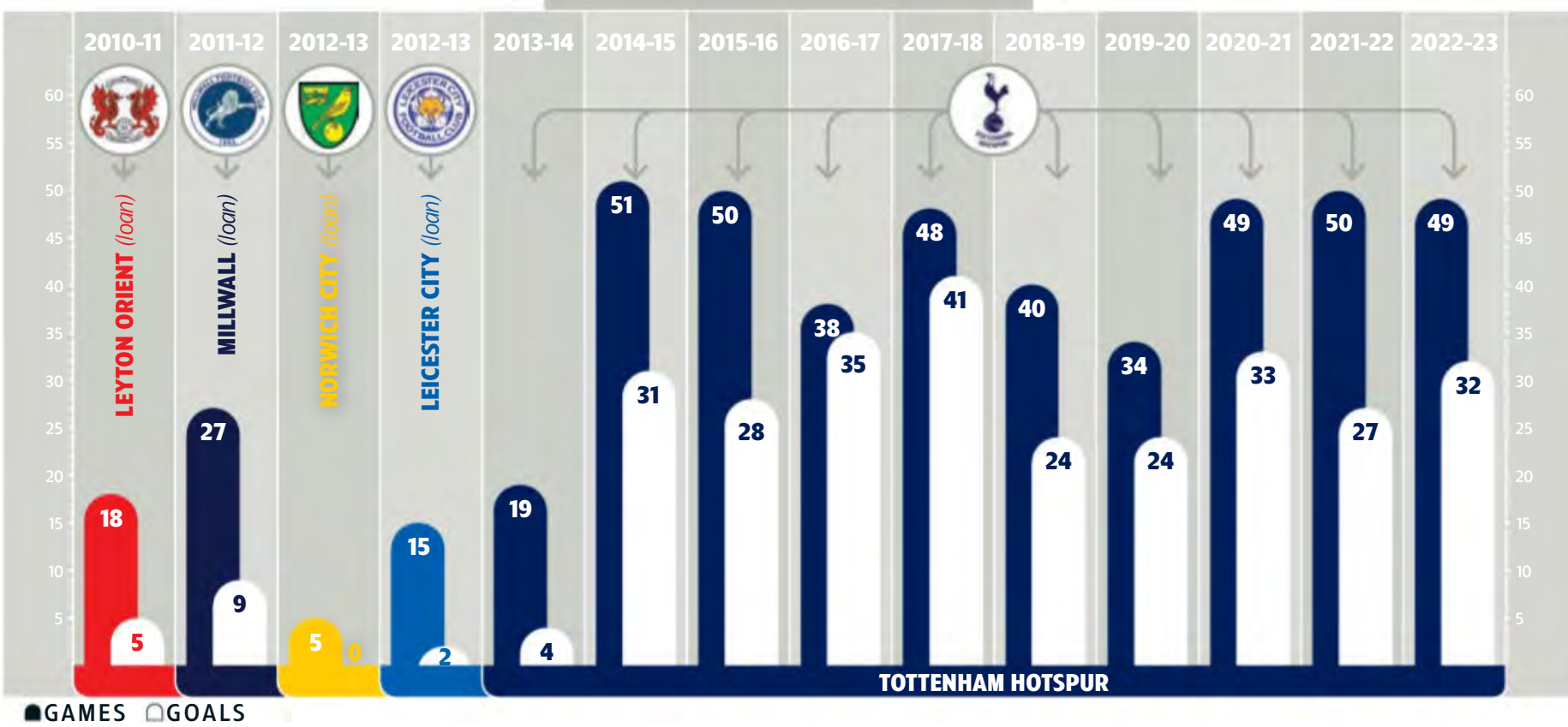
MOST EXPENSIVE ENGLISHMEN

£105m	**DECLAN RICE** *2023 (West Ham to Arsenal)*
£100m	**HARRY KANE** *2023 (Tottenham Hotspur to Bayern Munich)*
£100m	**JACK GREALISH** *2021 (Aston Villa to Manchester City)*
£88.5m	**JUDE BELLINGHAM** *2023 (Borussia Dortmund to Real Madrid)*
£80m	**HARRY MAGUIRE** *2019 (Leicester City to Manchester United)*

BUNDESLIGA'S ALL-TIME TOP-SCORING ENGLISHMEN

	GAMES	GOALS
Tony **WOODCOCK** *(Cologne)*	131	39
Jadon **SANCHO** *(B. Dortmund)*	104	38
Kevin **KEEGAN** *(Hamburg)*	90	32
Jude **BELLINGHAM** *(B. Dortmund)*	92	12
Reiss **NELSON** *(Hoffenheim)*	23	7
Owen **HARGREAVES** *(Bayern Munich)*	145	5
Peter **HOBDAY** *(Hannover/E. Frankfurt)*	61	5
Jamie **BYNOE-GITTENS*** *(B. Dortmund)*	20	3
Harry KANE* *(Bayern Munich)*	3	3

**Still active. Stats correct as of 14.09.23*



Words Jamie Evans

Alex SCOTT

Bournemouth

In a sentence
The latest English talent to emerge from the English Football League with a wealth of experience for a 20-year-old.

What they say
"I think he'll play for England, for sure, and he's got the potential to play for one of the top five or six teams in the Premier League."
Bristol City technical director Brian Tinnion

"We are delighted to welcome Alex to the club, who is one of the most exciting young players in Europe. He's a player that has vast experience at such a young age with strong technical ability and a really good footballing brain."
Neill Blake, Bournemouth chief executive

The story so far
By joining Bournemouth for £25 million in the summer, Scott returned to the club he had played for as a youngster.

Having been released by Southampton and, after spending a year with the Cherries' academy, the midfielder's senior career began back on Guernsey, the Channel Island where he grew up. After taking his first steps in men's football as a 16-year-old with the island's side – who play in the Isthmian League, the eighth tier of English football – Scott caught the attention of Championship outfit Bristol City. Within 30 minutes of his first trial match for the Robins, Scott had scored a hat-trick, and City's minds were made up; in December 2019 he signed his first professional contract with the club.

By the time he turned 18, Scott was establishing himself as a first-team regular at Ashton Gate. Primarily a central midfielder, he was asked to fill a number of roles for the team, including at right wing-back. By the 2022-23 campaign, he was simply too important to be shifted away from the centre of the pitch: of his 42 Championship games, 38 were in midfield, either as a holder, number ten or in box-to-box mode.

In March, and with the eyes of the terrestrial TV cameras watching, Scott impressed during the FA Cup defeat to Manchester City, drawing praise from pundits, opposition players and Pep Guardiola. A summer departure, from that point on, was inevitable. Eventually, after extensive speculation linking him with almost half the Premier League, Scott joined Bournemouth.

The next step
Scott joined Bournemouth shortly after sustaining a knee injury, so his first priority is recovery. Beyond that, the midfielder is ambitious: his top target is to progress from England's Under-20s to the seniors.

Strengths
Technically, Scott is the complete package, particularly adept at carrying the ball forwards and winning free-kicks. His versatility is demonstrative of a smart, all-round player.

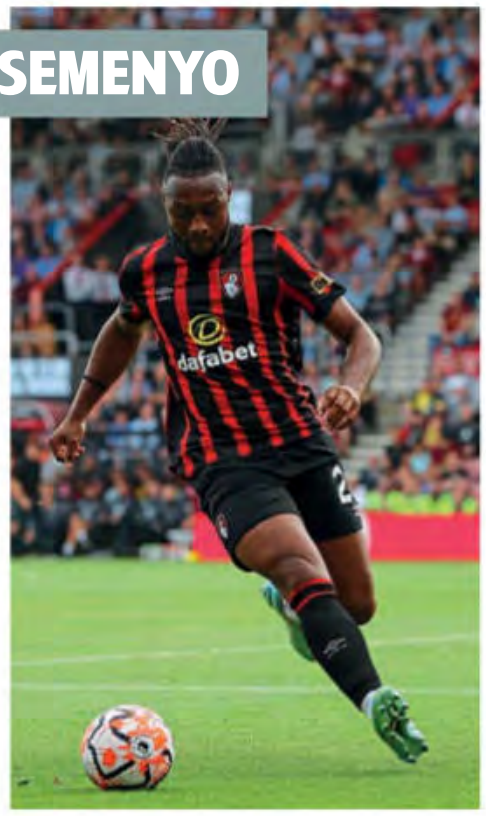
Weaknesses
It is almost impressive that Scott has made such a big impression on the Championship while only scoring five goals in 83 appearances. Still, his attacking numbers must improve.

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT SCOTT

- Scott became Guernsey's youngest-ever player when he made his debut for the non-league club at the age of 16.
- The midfielder played a key role in England Under-19s' European Championship victory in 2022, scoring in the semi-final win v Italy.
- Last season, he was named in the Championship's Team of the Year and won the league's Young Player of the Year award.

> "I think he'll play for England, for sure"
> Bristol City technical director Brian Tinnion

Antoine SEMENYO



Bournemouth
Alongside Scott and defender Lloyd Kelly, Semenyo is one of three Bristol City academy graduates currently playing at Bournemouth. His raw, powerful style makes him well-suited to the Cherries' ambitions of playing a chaotic pressing style under Andoni Iraola, while his goal at Anfield in August demonstrated his adjustment to the Premier League since arriving in January.

Ashley PHILLIPS

Tottenham
The winner of last season's Championship Apprentice Award – an honour which has previously been claimed by the likes of Ademola Lookman, Ben Brereton Diaz and Jude Bellingham – Phillips joined Spurs from Blackburn Rovers for £2m in the summer. "If you were to create a defender in the mould of how you would want one, this kid has got every attribute," said his former manager Tony Mowbray.

Jarrad BRANTHWAITE

Everton
A graduate from Carlisle United's academy, the tall centre-back joined Everton in January 2020 with just nine League Two appearances to his name. Excelled on loan at PSV in the Eredivisie last season and was part of England U21s' victorious European Championship campaign in the summer.

Chuba AKPOM

Ajax
The striker graduated from Arsenal's academy and has played in Greece (PAOK), Belgium (Sint-Truiden) and now the Netherlands, but more than half of his career appearances have been in the EFL. Last campaign's haul of 28 Championship goals for Middlesbrough was his best to date and earned him a €12.3m move to Ajax, potentially rising to €14.3m with add-ons.

Danny NAMASO LOADER

Porto
A member of England Under-17s' World Cup-winning side of 2017, Namaso Loader was a regular scorer in Porto's reserve team after joining them from Reading in 2020. A technically accomplished second striker, he was a regular off the bench last season and will be hoping to convert those appearances into starts for the Portuguese giants in 2023-24.

Iliman NDIAYE

Marseille
Sheffield United's hopes of Premier League survival were dealt a huge blow when Ndiaye, their best scorer and creator last season with 14 goals and ten assists, left in the summer. The Senegal striker actually made his Blades debut in the 2020-21 Premier League season, but excelled in the Championship with 21 goals across his two seasons in the English second tier.

Josef BURSIK

Club Brugge
At the time of writing, the Stoke City academy graduate is still waiting to make his first appearance for Brugge, with injuries hampering his progress since moving to Belgium in January this year. Those injuries also cost him his place in England's Under-21 squad in the summer's Euros, having been No.1 during qualifying. Another of the U17 World Cup winners of India 2017.

Viktor GYOKERES

Sporting
Signed by Brighton back in 2017, Gyokeres evolved into the impressive player he is today – a tall, powerful yet skilful centre-forward – on loan in the Championship; first at Swansea City and then Coventry City, whom he joined permanently in 2021. With 21 goals he took the Sky Blues to the brink of Premier League promotion last season, losing to Luton in the play-off final, and earned a move to Portuguese giants Sporting.

World champion... Bonmati celebrates at the final whistle of the World Cup final

FLOATING ON AIR

After adding the World Cup to her vast collection of silverware, Barcelona and Spain midfielder Aitana Bonmati is untouchable

Words: Asif Burhan

"I'm on the air right now," said Aitana Bonmati moments after Spain won the Women's World Cup in Sydney in August. For those watching the performances of the sinuous midfielder, it appears she has long-since been floating on a higher plane.

Such were Aitana's performances for both club and country that Alexia Putellas, the two-time Ballon d'Or award winner, was left on the substitutes' bench in the finals of both the Women's Champions League and World Cup while Aitana starred. With Putellas sidelined through injury for the majority of the past season, Barcelona did not attempt to replace her. Instead, they signed England defensive midfielder Keira Walsh and released Aitana further forward to devastating effect.

Only one player had more shots than her at the Women's World Cup (20) and alongside her fellow playmaker in the Spanish team, Jenni Hermoso, she was in the top ten for completed passes (327), a category usually reserved for defenders under less pressure on the ball. Yet mere statistics do not do her justice; Aitana's touch and style always make her a pleasure to watch in a way you cannot measure. Her ability to control the flow of a match to her own will is reminiscent of some of the greats of the game.

She had already dominated the European club season, registering the highest number of assists (eight) in the Champions League, as well as finishing as the second-highest goalscorer. It was no surprise when the UEFA Technical Observer Panel nominated her as the Champions League Player of the Season, and in August she was voted the overall UEFA Women's Player of the Year.

Aitana took that form into the World Cup. Three goals, two assists and two Player of the Match awards culminated in her being awarded the FIFA Golden Ball as the best player in the tournament. It now seems inevitable that she will claim every individual prize this autumn, included the coveted Ballon d'Or, taking them all from her team-mate Putellas, for so long the benchmark of excellence in the women's game.

Looking back on the World Cup, Aitana admits that "being a world champion is the dream of any footballer. It is the highest and greatest honour that can be aspired to at international level. Achieving it is amazing. It's still hard to believe."

Aitana did not start a game at the last World Cup in France, limited to 58 minutes as a substitute, as Spain went out in the round of 16 to eventual champions the United States. There, she was captivated by one player in particular: "I was surprised by the way Rose Lavelle played, in fact I asked her for her shirt. Among all the physical

wonders of the USA, she stood out for her class and her driving with the ball."

That Aitana was drawn to another diminutive playmaker was entirely fitting. The Catalan was brought up watching the Barcelona's men during the Golden Age of Xavi, Andres Iniesta and Lionel Messi, who demonstrated to a small girl entering *La Masia* at the age of 13 that size was no barrier to reaching the top of the game.

"Thanks to being able to enjoy this type of small-looking but skilled player, I have always thought that football is not only for tall and strong-looking people. Football is for the smart and clever and I think being small and having a low centre of gravity has many advantages. For example, you can be more skilled, faster with the ball [and] it can be more difficult to take the ball from you. Then it comes together with the mental ability to see football before others. This is not about whether you are big or small."

For Barcelona, Aitana wears the number 14 made famous by the modern father figure of the club, Johan Cruyff. Her first World Cup goal this summer against Costa Rica was embellished by a blink-and-you-miss-it turn worthy of the Dutch master. It was a balletic piece of skill that she replicated with both her goals in the round of 16 thrashing of Switzerland.

Champions League winner...Bonmati in action during last season's competition

"I am proud to wear the number 14, which has so much meaning for the world of football in honour of the figure of Johan Cruyff. Obviously I didn't see him play but, beyond his football, I think Cruyff is a role model for all of us because of the legacy he left once he retired. As a coach, he was the leader of Barca's Dream Team and the creator of the DNA so representative of Barca that we still play with today.

"Off the field, through his foundation [for which Bonmati is an ambassador], we dedicate a lot of effort so that boys and girls, regardless of the environment where they were born, have the resources to access sport and can have fun and learn through something as healthy as practising sport."

Praise for a Catalan does not come higher than that from the former Champions League-winning player and coach, Pep Guardiola. Asked about the Women's World Cup on the eve of the final, the Manchester City manager felt compelled to pick out one player. "Aitana Bonmati is a football player who has me completely in love with her for the way she plays. I would say she is like the women's Iniesta."

As a woman, Aitana has always been acutely aware of her responsibilities, on and off the pitch. An ingrained sense of justice was instilled in her at a young age when she fought to take her mother's name, Bonmati, ahead of her father's (Conca) in a break with Spanish custom which ultimately led to a change in the country's law in 2000.

After she inspired Barcelona to recover from 2-0 down at half-time to win the Champions League final against Wolfsburg, she chose to use her spotlight to don a T-shirt urging us all to "Welcome Refugees".

Golden Ball winner...Bonmati collects her trophy after the World Cup final victory over England

Standout star... Bonmati takes on England's Georgia Stanway during last year's European Championship

Away from the game, she works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and has accompanied migrant children from Honduras and Ukraine to matches at Camp Nou.

Aitana is adamant that the increased demands on her time as a world champion will not restrict her humanitarian efforts. "I don't think my life will change much because I will remain the same, but it is true that winning the World Cup gives you a lot of international impact. Already with Barca we are lucky to have noticed this repercussion and awareness by winning two UEFA Women's Champions League titles, but it is clear that the World Cup is a very big showcase that reaches even more people. It is a source of pride that our work is recognised more and more, and what we do on a day-to-day basis is more valued. I am very proud to continue to be a reference for so many people."

> "Aitana Bonmati is a football player who has me completely in love with her for the way she plays. I would say she is like the women's Iniesta"
>
> **Pep Guardiola**

During the European Championship last summer, she entranced fans and journalists alike with her humility and generosity off the pitch, as much as her mesmeric performances on it. "The truth is that I felt very valued and loved in England. All the people I spoke with always had good words, as well as the journalists with whom I did interviews. These kinds of things give you personal satisfaction and make you feel grateful."

For a long time it appeared Aitana would not even take part in the World Cup. Last September, she was one of "*Las 15*" who sent an e-mail to the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) asking not to be considered for selection to the national team, citing inadequate working conditions which were significantly affecting their "emotional state" and "health".

Over the spring, relations began to soften as the RFEF began to make some concessions such as the launch of an economic fund to finance travel for the players' relatives to the tournament in Australia and New Zealand. Some of the 15 players relented, sending another e-mail asking to be considered for selection once more. Aitana, along with Barcelona team-mates Ona Batlle and Mariona Caldentey, returned to play pivotal roles during the tournament, all starting the World Cup final.

Looking back at everything that occurred over a turbulent summer, Aitana says: "After the tough year we've had – not in my club, but at international level – I would not have imagined it, but I am a professional player and I was clear what the goal was. Me, personally, and the team worked hard on our part to make this possible. We have had an ambitious and winning mentality since the first day, and as we were going from match to match we believed that it was possible to win the World Cup." Before the end of the year, she will be lifting many more awards.

Full debut... Gvardiol made his first Premier League start against Newcastle United

MAKING OF A SUPERSTAR

From humble beginnings to playing for the best club side on the planet, Josko Gvardiol was always destined for the top

Words: Juraj Vrdoljak

Ahead of the Croatia v Morocco third place play-off game at last year's World Cup, most of the people in the Croatian capital, Zagreb, were – as elsewhere in the country – glued to their TV screens. However, at the biggest open market in the heart of the city one shop was open as if it was just another regular day.

Tihomir Gvardiol came to his small shop as he did for the past 41 years; hailing from a small coastal town of Novigrad, he eventually settled down up north, plying his fish-selling trade. But the World Cup brought different clientele than the usual one, as Tihomir was now facing a long line of journalists, eager to find out why he isn't in Qatar himself. It isn't as if his son, Josko, wasn't playing on the world's biggest stage, ready to vie for a World Cup medal and soon to be named in almost everyone's team of the tournament. And all this aged just 20 at the time with a transfer value already approaching a record-breaking figure to any potential suitor – a sum much larger than the price of fish at his dad's place.

"Ah, I don't know, that's all way too much for me", said the proud, but also humble dad. He did add that he thought about making the distant trip, but "there weren't any flights available". "I still look at him as my child, first and foremost. Those sums in football are, in general, beyond me. Not so long ago he'd be here, taking that number 12 tram from his school to give me a hand and keep me company."

Old Tiho might not be catching up with the galloping inflation rates in football, but his Josko has now made his big move, becoming one of the most expensive centre-backs in football history after Manchester City prised him away from RB Leipzig in a €90 million summer deal. Yet a huge chunk of football-crazed people in Croatia will share his father's sentiment, still seeing him as a kid who once posted a Facebook plea asking for a budget suggestion for a PC monitor purchase so he could enjoy a round of *Counter Strike* after a long day of school followed by football practice.

When it comes to his remarkable football rise, it isn't the number 12 tram that tells his story as much as the number 5 one; one that leads from Maksimir park, opposite Dinamo Zagreb's stadium, to his childhood home in a Srednjaci skyscraper.

Medal...Gvardiol collecting his third place prize at the 2022 World Cup

The route, which generally takes around half an hour, made him viral back in November 2019.

Josko was only 17 at the time, marking his first senior start for the Croatian champions in a game against the then-relegation struggling Inter Zapresic side. Turns out that his inclusion was vital, regardless of the stark difference in quality between the two teams. Even though he was fielded in a generally unnatural role as a left-back, Josko got his first senior goal, also turning out to be a decisive one. Dinamo wasn't his first club – he began playing football as a pre-school child at the nearby lower-tier neighbourhood team called NK Tresnjevka – but he's been the pride of Zagreb since the early age of eight.

It's no wonder that nowadays everyone claims Josko truly was a generational talent from the very start. He indeed was regularly featuring alongside older boys due to his notable skillset; however, in football it takes merely one differing opinion to make a life-defining difference. Gvardiol reminded the public how he was about to completely give up playing football at the age of just 15, frustrated at the fact that one coach at the Dinamo academy was snubbing him because of a differing long-term vision regarding his natural position.

Fortunately for Gvardiol, as well as world football, that only turned out to be an isolated point of view. Eventually there was a change of staff at the club, where the new ones promptly decided to return Josko to the squad. His parents were a bit scarred by the incident, still adamant that, despite his lavish talent, pursuing a college degree would be a wiser long-term option.

And again, like that particular coaching staff member, Josko proved them wrong as well. Less than two years on Gvardiol was paired up with his future national team partner Josip Sutalo as part of Dinamo Zagreb's Under-19 squad, who managed to see off Liverpool in a memorable Youth League knockout round game.

Two years after that, aged just 19 years, four months and 21 days, Josko became the youngest Croat to feature at the Euros, where he was named a starter in their opening game against England at Wembley – despite the

Guidance...under instruction from Pep Guardiola

fact that his debut for the senior national team came just a week earlier in a friendly against Belgium. Also, after scoring his first goal for Croatia in a 2022 World Cup qualifier away to Cyprus in October 2021, Gvardiol became the second-youngest goalscorer in the country's history, behind none other than national team legend Ivan Rakitic.

It is also very well worth mentioning that he went on to play the whole duration of the Euros, including the round of 16 game v Spain, in his more unnatural position at left-back. Another couple of years on from that, and within the span of just six years, he's gone from nearly quitting football to winning a bronze medal at the World Cup as an undisputed starter – by which time he'd been reverted to his favourite position at centre-back – and now becoming the second most expensive defender of all time.

And yet, in between gutting a fish with his trademark wide smile for a local TV feature and staging his big move to Manchester City, Gvardiol inadvertently launched a reminder of perhaps his biggest quality, the one that took him to these heights. In his childhood room, shared with his two sisters in his native apartment block, Gvardiol revealed a poster with a hand-written mental map of his professional goals.

At the top, he states friends and family as a source of "love, support and motivation". Down below, he points out discipline, from which the plan goes branching to "process", "training", "nutrition" and "focus". And a large "SUCCESS" that leads to "top club" sticks out as the main goal. Still, that was only "Plan A". What about Plan B?

"If I failed as a footballer, I would have nothing against becoming a fisherman like my dad", Josko told the press. "I never felt disgusted by the odour of the fish; we are, in the end, just ordinary down-to-earth people, far from ever being well off. And every success I end up having is in a way just my way of returning a favour to my parents".

Gvardiol is not only a hyper-intelligent player, always willing to learn and adapt regardless of his rapid rise. His humility made him a perfect fit for Pep Guardiola, one of football's greatest modern-age mentors. And even Pep wasn't the first one to see those qualities in Josko; Marcelo Bielsa, in a lot of ways mentor to the Catalan genius, first approached Gvardiol after he took Leeds United back to the Premier League. However, Josko – although completely flabbergasted by the interest and the opportunity to merely speak to such a football brain in person – opted out of the deal, stating he'd at the time still get "eaten alive" in the world's most competitive and glamorous league.

However, as it has always been the case with him, it didn't take long before Pep became the one who'd eventually fish him out as a true trophy catch. And rest assured, there's not that much fish in the sea similar to Josko. A true, humble kid streamlined for success.

> It's no wonder that nowadays everyone claims Josko truly was a generational talent from the very start

Formative years... Gvardiol in Europa League action as an 18-year-old for Dinamo Zagreb

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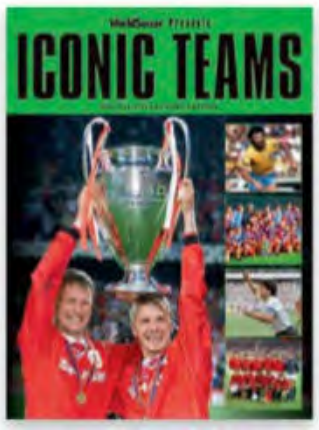

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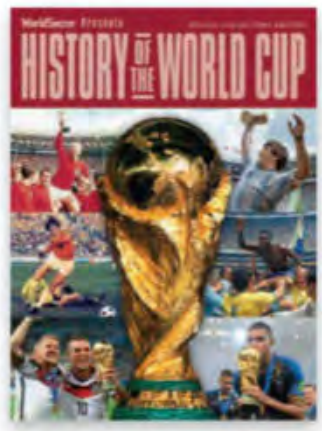

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England v Australia... Michael Owen skips past Socceroos duo Josip Skoko and Paul Okon in 2003

'NO SUCH THING AS A FRIENDLY'

A landmark victory, a record-breaking teenager, and controversial substitutes – *World Soccer* turns the clock back 20 years to an infamous friendly between England and Australia

Words: Jamie Evans

The year 2003 was a notable one for the sporting rivalry between England and Australia. In cricket, Australia retained the Ashes at the start of the year with a 4-1 series home win before beating England en route to the World Cup two months later; Leyton Hewitt and Mark Philippoussis dispatched their opponents from Great Britain on the way to winning tennis' Davis Cup; while Jonny Wilkinson kicked the drop goal that gave England the rugby union World Cup trophy over the Wallabies in Sydney.

In comparison, the football match that took place between the two nations at Upton Park on a drizzly February evening was an entirely inconsequential affair, yet 20 years on – and with the

sides due to meet again in October – it is a game that continues to fascinate.

Strangely, for two countries that have been locking horns in most sports for well over a century, this was only the sixth official meeting between England and Australia. The first was as recent as 1980. Prior to that, the FA had only ever put out unofficial representative sides to face the Socceroos in games shorn of international status. Three more friendlies followed in 1983, and another in 1991, before England finally hosted the Australians during the 2002-03 season.

For the visitors, taking on their former colonisers in their own backyard was a landmark occasion, but they went into the game still reeling from failing to qualify for the 2002 World Cup. The play-off defeat to Uruguay 15 months earlier had ended their dreams of going to Japan & South Korea; instead, they went to New Zealand for the OFC Nations Cup with a squad featuring only one of their European-based stars. As a result, the game in East London was the first time in well over a year that their first-choice squad had been together.

Looking back on the game with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Australia's then-manager Frank Farina said: "We hadn't played any games and there was a whole lot of crap going on at the time...They were bad times. The infighting was just ridiculous."

The odds were stacked against Australia, yet they were fired up. "England had better treat us with respect. If they don't they could get beaten," said defender Lucas Neill ahead of the game. "There is no such thing as a friendly between England and Australia whatever the sport, and we will certainly be taking it very seriously."

To say that the game was not eagerly anticipated in England would be an understatement. Sven-Goran Eriksson's revelation that he would field two completely different line-ups in each half had done little to whet the appetite. The club-v-country debate hung over the match, with Premier League managers – particularly Alex Ferguson and Arsene Wenger, whose Manchester United and Arsenal sides would meet in the FA Cup just three days later – bristling at their players being called up. In an attempt to assuage their concerns and rest his players, Eriksson promised that no player would see more than 45 minutes of action. *The Guardian* previewed the game by describing it as: "What will surely prove to be the most meaningless friendly in a long time," while Matt Lawton, writing in the *Daily Mail*, called it a "ludicrous friendly".

> "We hadn't played any games and there was a whole lot of crap going on at the time...They were bad times"
>
> Former Australia manager Frank Farina

Both sides began the match with teams that would later be described as their country's "Golden Generation". For England, a back four of Gary Neville, Rio Ferdinand, Sol Campbell and Ashley Cole started in front of David James, with David Beckham, Frank Lampard and Paul Scholes in midfield, and Michael Owen up front. For the visitors, star man Harry Kewell (Leeds United) was joined in the line-up by several other Premier League players, including Neill (Blackburn Rovers), Mark Viduka (Leeds United) and Mark Schwarzer (Middlesbrough).

England played the first half very much like a group of players whose main priority was to preserve themselves for future tests. By contrast, Australia approached the game like their colleagues from rugby or cricket, where every Test matters.

On 17 minutes, a typically late challenge by Scholes was punished from the resultant free-kick as Tony Popovic rose unchallenged to head Australia in front. Then, just before half-time, Kewell – who went into the game nursing a thigh injury yet insisted on playing – pounced on an error from Ferdinand, shrugging off his former Leeds team-mate before coolly rounding James to make it 2-0. The hosts' "A-Team" rallied, but failed to hit the target and departed the pitch to a chorus of boos.

"England's first XI were awful, losing to a far more industrious and infinitely more inventive Australia," wrote Lawton. "Plenty of hard-thinking to be done and done quickly," said Martin Tyler on commentary duty. "We'll bring you the news of what England changes there will be."

Eriksson followed through on his promise. Among the 11 changes were five debutants, including a record-breaking teenager.

"Over 130 years of England matches, almost 800 games, 1,113 previous players, and now it's Wayne Rooney," said Tyler, as the Everton wonderkid became England's youngest-ever player at 17 years and 111 days.

With his first touch, Rooney deftly chested the ball down to Jermaine Jenas, then collected the return pass. From the corner of the penalty area, he floated a cross in towards Darius Vassell, whose shot hit the side-netting. "Rooney makes an impact straightaway," remarked Tyler.

Soon after, the teenager linked up with his fellow subs again, laying off for an onrushing Jenas, whose cross from the right flank was met with a glancing header at the near post by Francis Jeffers' to make it 2-1.

Landmark victory... (from L-R) Lucas Neill, Craig Moore and Stan Lazaridis celebrate Australia's win

One-cap wonder...Jeffers celebrates scoring

Record-breaker ...Wayne Rooney

"It was a good goal. I don't score many headers," recalled the then-Arsenal striker of his only England goal. For a player with 13 goals in 16 caps for the Under-21s, it should have been the start of a successful international career, but Jeffers never played for England again – unlike his fellow Liverpudlian and strike partner on the night.

Rooney continued to lead the fight-back for England's youngsters, but they couldn't find an equaliser. In the 84th minute, Brett Emerton raced onto a through ball and put the Socceroos 3-1 up.

"I was still playing my football in Holland [at Feyenoord], and had ambitions to play in England, so for me it was a good opportunity to put in a decent performance and put my name out there," Emerton told the *Sydney Morning Herald*. And, sure enough, later that year he joined Blackburn Rovers.

The wide-man was not the only Australian for whom the game was a springboard: Vince Grella made his international debut, while Neill won only his third of 96 international caps. All but one of the starters went on to the 2006 World Cup (Paul Okon was replaced by Tim Cahill), as the Socceroos made history by reaching the knockout stages for the first time.

To describe the match as the dawning of a new era is no exaggeration, nor is it said with hindsight. "Socceroos crush England in historic win," said the *Sydney Morning Herald* the next day. "Roos Rule Britannia," declared *Fox Sports*, with The *West Australian* adding: "Kewell on fire as England in ashes".

Michael Edgley, of the Socceroos' supporters group Green & Gold Army, recalled the walk away from the stadium to the *Sydney Morning Herald*: "There was a lot of discussion: What is the potential of that team? How much can we achieve? This could be the team that breaks out the sport in the mainstream back in Australia." Now, 20 years on, the game is regarded as one the team's most significant victories.

While the Australians revelled in a landmark victory, the English despaired. "First cricket, then tennis, now this... Aussies Rule," sighed the *Daily Express*, with *The Mirror*'s back page simply stating: "Roo-bish". Praise for Rooney was almost drowned out by criticism of Eriksson, the FA and the senior players for serving up such an embarrassing evening. In these pages, Brian Glanville wrote that Eriksson's decision to make 11 half-time changes was "a craven dereliction of responsibility."

"He [Eriksson] should simply have told the ever-erupting Alex Ferguson and Arsene Wenger – who seemed to have nothing to say about so many of his players being called up by France – to grin and bear it," Glanville added.

In a rarely forthright interview after the game, Beckham criticised fans for booing the second-half players, before expressing his frustration at being substituted. "The 11 who came off would have loved to have stayed on, and that's the disappointing and annoying thing about playing half a game."

English football, though, did move on. The game now is remembered as a curiosity, the nadir in an era of turgid internationals, and imbedded in the record books for Rooney's debut. But in the list of England's most traumatic defeats, it registers way behind USA in 1950, Hungary in 1953 or Iceland in 2016.

Still, it did leave a lasting legacy on the wider international game. Soon after, Sepp Blatter weighed in: "If he [Eriksson] is not able to [insist] that he will play with the best players during the 90 minutes, then he should not play the match. The FA should not arrange such a game". Sure enough, soon afterwards FIFA banned international managers from making more than six substitutions in friendlies, while the international match calendar was also revised.

When these two sides meet again in October, it will be afforded friendly status yet, in their first-ever game at Wembley, it will not be treated as such by the Australians. Their players know that a victory will be another milestone in the Socceroos' history books and, as Neill says, there is no such thing as a friendly between England and Australia.

LINE-UPS

ENGLAND first half (4-4-2): *James; G. Neville, Ferdinand, Campbell, A. Cole; Beckham, Scholes, Lampard, Dyer; Beattie, Owen.*

ENGLAND second half (4-4-2): *Robinson; Mills, Brown, King, Konchesky; Hargreaves, Jenas, Murphy, Vassell; Rooney, Jeffers.*

AUSTRALIA (4-4-2): *Schwarzer; Neill, Moore, Popovic (T. Vidmar 72), Lazaridis; Emerton, Okon (Muscat 87), Skoko (Bresciano 46), Chipperfield (Grella 76); Viduka, Kewell (Aloisi 56).*

MATCH IN NUMBERS

6
Six England players made their senior international debuts (James Beattie, Paul Robinson, Jermaine Jenas, Paul Konchesky, Francis Jeffers and Wayne Rooney)

5
England also included five unused subs (Richard Wright, Joe Cole, Matthew Upson, Sean Davis and Scott Parker)

124
In becoming England's youngest debutant, Rooney broke a 124-year-old record previously set in 1897

1
This was the first-ever senior international to be played at West Ham United's old ground Upton Park

JONATHAN BOND

"I love playing here and I've found a home"

After coming through the academy at Watford, Jonathan Bond arrived at LA Galaxy in January 2021 via Reading, West Brom and seven loan spells. A former England Under-21 international, the 30-year-old goalkeeper is now enjoying life in Major League Soccer

What's it like to be playing in the US after arguably the greatest player of all time, Lionel Messi, signed for Inter Miami in the summer?
It's exciting. There are inevitable conversations between everyone in the changing room about his performances, stuff that's happened in their games and when we might play against him and Miami. We'd both have to make the MLS Cup final in December for that to happen this year, but next year it's potentially likely we will play them. It's something you can't get away from, we definitely talk about it and we're also excited about it. It is very good for our league and brings a lot of attention to MLS and we can't help but be excited when he does some amazing things. It is in another Conference [the Eastern] so is a bit disconnected to us. He has started on fire and won the Leagues Cup, so that shows the difference he's made. Off the pitch, it's meant more subscriptions to [league broadcaster] Apple TV and a lot more shirt sales.

You've seen Gareth Bale come and go at neighbours LAFC, too. How does Messi mania compare?
When I came out here, it was off the back of Zlatan [Ibrahimovic] being at Galaxy. Some of the teams now have gone in a different direction: the scouting has improved and the league's getting younger; players they can then sell on to European teams. Add in Bale, Messi and [Lorenzo] Insigne [of Toronto FC] and each team is operating slightly differently now. There's more focus on the dynamics of the team here because we're trying to play a certain way and not just going to try to sign the biggest superstars anymore, which is, in my opinion, probably the right way to go. [But] it's worked for Miami so far and they've had success with it.

In August, Galaxy signed former Sheffield United striker Billy Sharp. Did you know him from your time in England?
He scored a penalty against me when I was on loan at Gillingham and he was at Sheffield United in League One. I went the right way, nearly saved it, but he scored and it was the late winner. He is a big character, he's very experienced and knows how to score goals at the top level so he is going to bring a lot. He got his first goal straightaway and is going to be important for us. I think he is going to help the two strikers that we've got, who are younger, and there's a lot they'll learn from him. Speaking to him, he wanted a new challenge and a new experience and he's definitely getting that here. Other than myself, he's the only English player at the club. It's a very different dynamic to what the Sheffield United changing room was like, I'm sure. I can tell he's really enjoying it and I expect him to score a lot of goals.

Sharp's arrival has helped compensate for the absence of one of your Designated Players, former Manchester United and Real Madrid striker Javier Hernandez, who has torn the ACL in his knee. How big a loss has he been for you this term?
He is a good person, first of all, and I didn't know what to expect of the DPs when I first came here. I thought: "Chicharito's going to be the biggest DP, is he going to be throwing his weight around?" but it was the complete opposite. He was first in and last out, does the extra training and sets the example, has a very positive mindset, is very encouraging, very vocal and puts the team first in every aspect. I was very positively impressed and I get on really well with him so very, very sad for him that he had such a serious injury at a point ➤

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Loan experience...a young Bond in action for Peterborough United during the 2017-18 season

"Very happy"...the goalkeeper has been proud of his level of performance so far in Major League Soccer

where he can't make it back this season. He's scored a lot of goals for us and last season it showed in our results a bit when we didn't have him through injury. When he was fit and firing, we were winning games – simple as that. He's probably the best finisher I've ever seen in training and is a big loss for us.

Are you happy with the way the move has worked out since you moved to California in January 2021?
Very happy. I feel I've found the game time I needed and also a level of performance I'm proud of. I've shown everyone my strengths and what I can do and been able to express myself as a No.1 rather than having to come in for cup games and it's very difficult. I felt like I've taken the opportunity I've been given here and, three years in, I've loved every minute of it. It is now about finding that success with the team – that would be perfect.

How hard was it to make the move then?
I moved from Watford to Reading and I found it really difficult. Geographically, it's very close but the change of club was a really big lesson. I went to West Brom and loved it there but I wasn't getting the game time as I had Sam Johnstone ahead of me. I just needed an opportunity to play. I'd never played in America before but my Mum is American, I have an American passport and I used to come out here as a kid. So it wasn't completely alien to me but I knew I needed to get my processes and routine in really quickly. If you don't get that, you can get lost and it starts to affect you on the pitch. That allowed me to get a good pre-season, then a good season, and followed that up with last season, and before you know it you're three years in. Hopefully I've got a lot longer, whether it's here or wherever, but hopefully longer here.

> "It is very good for our league and brings a lot of attention to MLS and we can't help but be excited when he does some amazing things…he has started on fire"
> Bond on Lionel Messi's impact in MLS

Young Lion... Bond shouting out instructions for the England Under-21s in 2015

Would you return to England?
I want to play the highest level I can. Whether that's going to be continuing what I'm doing here with the way the league is growing and the level is getting higher every year – you can feel that on the pitch – or whether it's somewhere else, I just want to concentrate on the day-to-day and seeing where it takes me.

Confident...Bond claims a cross against New York Red Bulls

It's a win-win because I love playing here and I've found a home and have a good connection with people at the club and the fanbase. So if I'm here, I'm happy. But if I get an opportunity to play at the highest level, then that's also something I would be happy doing too. You don't sit and plan your career.

Has Los Angeles been everything you hoped it would be off the pitch?
It has – it is an amazing lifestyle but I knew my priority and primary focus is always football. I maybe don't get to enjoy, during the season at least, where I'm living as much. I'm always thinking of extra training, rest, recovery, staying out of the sun. I do the same things I'd do in England but maybe they look a bit different on my days off. It's train, go home, maybe go for dinner and not going out to this place, that place. That would get exhausting after a while. In the off-season, you can explore and you feel "wow, there's so much to do and enjoy here". The weather makes a big difference, just to wake up every day knowing it is going to be sunny is a big deal.

Would you urge other English players to take the plunge and play abroad?
MLS has so much international influence, from all over the world, and I love that. Maybe it's suited me more, my style, my strengths as a goalkeeper. It's not all about England – we think it's everything when we're there and English players don't often want to go anywhere else, but, to step out of that bubble, I've enjoyed it a lot and if I could have done it earlier, maybe I would have. It's becoming more normal now, look at Harry Kane [at Bayern Munich] and Jude Bellingham [at Real Madrid]. It's something I would recommend, for young players to come out here to MLS. You have to have an open mind and be adaptable. You'd learn a lot more than playing in the Under-23s for one of the top teams back home. Come and play against [Xherdan] Shaqiri, Insigne, you're going to learn so much. I love the Premier League and the Championship – for me it's the most exciting football in the world – but there's so much to learn from other countries and other leagues and I feel English players don't get to see that, or get the opportunities, or maybe don't want to do it.

Interview by Matthew Nash

Messi mania...Bond says the Inter Miami man's impact has been spoken about in the LA Galaxy changing room

MARCO ROSSI

"I will be thankful to Hungary until the end of my life"

Hungary's Italian coach discusses his adopted home, rejection in his birth country, and a possible future in England

Before you became Honved's head coach in 2012, you coached some small Italian clubs. How did the Hungarians find you?
It happened almost by coincidence. It was a quite lucky situation. I visited a friend of mine, who has a restaurant in Budapest. At that time, I was without a club. He said to me: "Why don't you call Fabio Cordella, the sports director of Honved?" I'd never called anyone to ask for a job before. I don't like to offer myself. I'm not born in that way.

However, both my friend and my wife spent the whole day suggesting that I should call him. Eventually I was so exhausted by the whole thing that, in the end, I called him. We met, had dinner, he spoke with George Hemingway [Honved chairman], and so I began working at Honved.

In the first year, we finished third, which was Honved's best result since winning the league title in 1993. Afterwards the team was rebuilt, we played with many young players, including Under-19s, but we had a decent campaign and finished in mid-table. Then I resigned, they changed coaches, and then in February 2015 they called me to come back. Honved were in the relegation battle, but we managed to stay up. In 2015-16, we finished eighth and in the next season, we won the league title. It was like a miracle, as we had a much lower budget than other clubs.

We all know the cliché that Italians are masters of the defensive game; what is your football philosophy?
Quite pragmatic. I'm convinced that you can attack only when you have the ball. When I look back at the trajectory with Hungary, in the beginning it was quite a difficult period. Practically 80 per cent of the team has been changed.

My idea is to play attacking football, but with a solid defence and with short distances between defence, midfield and attack. Attacking is impossible without an automatic way of defending. While we are defending, we must be solid enough to start attacking. So, basically, I believe that first you must be good at defending and then you can start playing football.

Which coaches inspired you during your playing career?
I have to point out Marcelo Bielsa and Mircea Lucescu. I worked Under Bielsa in Mexico [at Club America]. I was impressed with how deeply he handled all tactical aspects in defence, midfield and attack. I worked with Lucescu at Brescia and I liked how he was focused on improving players and on their individual commitment.

Your achievements with Hungary so far are really impressive. What has been the key factor in this remarkable progress?
Good contact with the players. We are in touch all the time, we organise video meetings, we talk not only about tactical and technical things, but also try to cover the mental aspect. We are united and compact. Many opposition coaches tell me that we look like a club team. I think that is the best compliment we could get.

Is that 4-0 victory against England the high point of your career so far?
I hope for Hungary to have many more matches like that one in the future but, of course, that game entered into history and will be remembered by everybody, like the 6-3 win at Wembley back in 1953.

When Hungary defeated Iceland 2-1 in November 2020 to qualify for Euro 2020 you were absent after testing positive for COVID. Where did you watch that game?
Yes, I had a positive test, but I was okay. I just had a headache and a light cough. During the ➤

nZ3

Career high point...Hungary players celebrate beating England 4-0 in the UEFA Nations League in June 2022

game, I was at home and we organised a video link with the dressing room, so I was able to communicate with my staff and the players in real time before the match and at the half-time interval, but also during the match. Of course, it would have been nicer to be on the touchline, but we made the best of that situation.

You've had a good start in the Euro 2024 qualifiers. Are you confident that Hungary can qualify for a third consecutive European Championship?
On paper it looks like an easy group, but on the pitch things can look different. In any case, I hope that we will qualify either as group winners or as runners-up.

After more than ten years in Hungary, there is obviously a special bond between you and the country. What do you like the most about it?
Many things. First of all the people and the way I feel their respect. In Hungary, I feel at home. I will be thankful to Hungary until the end of my life. Here I got the opportunity to become a coach, to save my dignity in a period when I was almost depressed. I am sure that my connection with Hungary will never end.

You have been very successful in Hungary, but you've never coached a Serie A club in your homeland Italy. What can you say about this?
I have to say that almost certainly in the future I also won't be coaching a Serie A club. The reason for this is clear: in Italy everything revolves around Italy and nobody cares that I have worked successfully in Hungary for ten years. In Italy I would always be a *scommessa* [gamble]. If I got a coaching job in Italy, they would bet that I would be sacked after three months.

Your question is not painful. I'm neither sorry nor frustrated about this. I'm not young anymore, but I feel much younger and I'm trying to improve every day and to perform in my job in the best possible way.

Still, if you received an interesting offer from an Italian club, would you be tempted to accept it?
In this job, everything is possible and, of course, it's not wise to refuse a good opportunity. But the fact is that in 11 years, since I left Italy, I never received any call from Italy. Apart from relatives and friends, of course! Frankly speaking, I don't think there will be any offers from Italy. In Italy they used to say: "If you work abroad, you are not good enough to work in Italy."

In any case, I feel very good in Hungary. I feel appreciated, I'm happy and fully committed to stay until the end of my contract. It is very likely that I will finish my coaching career here in Hungary.

> "In Italy everything revolves around Italy and nobody cares that I have worked successfully in Hungary for ten years…If I got a coaching job in Italy, they would bet that I would be sacked after three months"

You have a contract with Hungary until the end of 2025, and in the past you have said that your ambition is to work in England. What's your plan?
It's true. I said that if one day I should work somewhere else, my dream would be to work in England. England is the number one in European club football. Back in the 1990s Italy was, but now it's England and I think it will remain like this also in future.

After the European Championship finals in 2021, I had two offers from England: one from a Premier League club and one from a Championship club. But I refused video chats – it was during COVID – with the boards of those clubs. I told them that I didn't want to waste their time. At that point, there was no chance that I wanted to leave my job with Hungary. We were in the middle of World Cup qualifiers, after a good start, and I'd renewed my contract a few months before.

Last but not least, another important reason was that, after seeing the enthusiasm of our fans at Euro 2020, if I had left, I would have felt like a traitor. But, basically, everybody would like to work in England and I'm not an exception. If in the future, after my time in Hungary, there should be new offers, I would listen to them.

You must be happy that national team captain Dominik Szoboszlai has joined Liverpool. What are your expectations of how he will adapt to the Premier League?
Of course, for a newcomer it can happen that things won't be easy to adapt to a new club and a new league, but I believe that Dominik has the right qualities and commitment to prove his class at Liverpool. His way of shooting is amazing. In 50 years in football, I've never seen such a great shooting technique. He is also strong at keeping the ball. It was his idea to join Liverpool and I congratulate him. Playing in the Premier League is the right opportunity for him to show that he is a top player.

Honved hero...Rossi is thrown into the air by his players after winning the 2016-17 Hungarian league title

After the 2-0 defeat to Italy in the UEFA Nations League last September, Szoboszlai joined some Hungary fans for beer in a bar, and Adam Szalai did something similar a few years back. Did that happen spontaneously or is there an arrangement between the fan groups and the Hungarian Football Federation?

No, it was not planned. Our guys are really connected with the fans, so it's normal that sometimes they meet them outside the stadium. They never act like stars. I love it. I'm very happy that they have such an attitude.

Interview by Vladimir Novak

Euro 2020 group stage...Rossi addresses his players during the 1-1 draw with France in Budapest

Captain fantastic... Rossi believes Szoboszlai will be a hit at Liverpool

Glenn Moore

Domestic football returns

Europe's major leagues get back underway after the World Cup, with the Women's Super League the last to kick off

The women's season ought to have opened on a wave of anticipation in the wake of a record-breaking World Cup, yet the toxic fall-out from the behaviour of Spanish Football Federation president Luis Rubiales (see panel opposite) left many within the game wondering if the fight for respect will ever be won.

Even the constant linking of coaches, such as Sarina Wiegman and Emma Hayes, with jobs in the men's game grates. "I already coach elite players; it is not a stepping stone," said Hayes.

Eventually though, the football will become the focus and for Hayes and other coaches the challenge is easing the post-World Cup hangover. The late finish in Sydney, with the final on August 20, did not provide much of a break for the players involved. It is not just the physical fatigue; there is also the mental impact, for winners and losers, to be managed.

This was especially set to be the case for the winners, with Spain's season due to kick off on September 8, however a players strike over pay and conditions delayed the start of the campaign. Nonetheless, just days after the new world champions returned from Sydney in triumph, Barcelona were off to Mexico for a pre-season tour. Admittedly, only Alexia Putellas of the World Cup finalists joined the party, but others who had played at the finals, including new signing Esmee Brugts, made the trip.

On their return, Jonatan Giraldez had to integrate the two groups ahead of Barca's defence of their domestic and European crowns. Having won 28 of 30 matches, with their only defeat on the final day of last season with the title wrapped up, Barca are heavy favourites to win their fifth successive league title. Besides forward Brugts, they have also re-signed full-back and *La Masia* graduate Ona Batlle from Manchester United.

Real Madrid, who finished second, ten points adrift, have brought in winger Hayley Raso from Manchester City after a fine World Cup for Australia, as well as Lyon's Danish forward Signe Bruun. The latter replaces Esther Gonzalez, Real's all-time leading scorer, who has joined Gotham FC in the NWSL. Most eyes, however, will be on Colombia's teenage star Linda Caicedo, who will be starting her first full season in the capital after arriving in February.

The most difficult juggling act fell to Arsenal coach Jonas Eidevall. Seven of his players were in action Down Under on the final weekend, including new signings Alessia Russo (Manchester United), Laia Codina (Barcelona) and Amanda Ilestedt (PSG). There were also five players in various stages of recuperation from ACL injuries. This may, in part, help explain the Gunners' shock exit to Paris FC in the Champions League qualifiers.

With the WSL not starting until October 1 and Chelsea one of the four clubs (with Barcelona, Lyon and Bayern Munich) not required to enter qualifying for the Champions League, Hayes had an easier task assimilating her new recruits. They included Catarina Macario (Lyon), Ashley Lawrence (PSG), Sjoeke Nusken (Eintracht Frankfurt), Mia Fishel (Tigres) and two goalkeepers, Hannah Hampton (Aston Villa) and Nicky Evard (Leuven).

That investment made Chelsea favourites for a fifth successive title. While Arsenal, Manchester United and Manchester City can match them on the day, none have the Blues' depth.

United, preparing for their European debut, have signed Brazil forward Geyse (Barcelona) and World Cup Golden Boot winner Hinata Miyazawa (MyNavi Sendai) in an attempt to accomodate the loss of Russo. City, without European involvement for the first time in eight years, had just added Netherlands midfielder Jill Roord (Wolfsburg) at the time of writing.

Elsewhere in the WSL the other eye-catching recruits – highlighting the league's growing pull – were Aston Villa's acquisition of Dutch goalkeeper Daphne van Domselaar (Twente), Leicester City signing Belgium's Janice Cayman from Lyon, and Brighton capturing forward Pauline Bremer, last seen going close to a last-gasp equaliser in the Champions League final for Wolfsburg.

Tottenham have appointed Robert Vilahamn as coach replacing Rehanne Skinner, who was sacked in March. The Swede arrives from BK Hacken. Skinner herself is now at West Ham, replacing ex-England full-back Paul Konchesky.

Across the Channel, the most intriguing development is Lyon's women's team being taken over by Michele Kang, owner of Washington Spirit, with the men's side retaining a 48 per cent stake. The long-term aim is a global multi-club model.

In the short term, Lyon should retain the French title after luring Kadidiatou Diani from rivals PSG on a free, though the latter have Marie-Antoinette Katoto back from an ACL while Lyon have lost Delphine Cascarino to the same injury. Lyon's attacking options are further boosted by Haitian Melchie Dumornay (Reims), who impressed at the World Cup.

Cascarino's twin sister Estelle has left PSG for Juventus, part of a French-

Domestic football returns...Chelsea striker Sam Kerr celebrates scoring last season

> The late finish in Sydney, with the final on August 20, did not provide much of a break for the players involved

orientated squad refresh as *La Vecchia Signora* seek to regain the Italian title. Having won five titles in succession since being formed in 2017, Roma's triumph last year was a shock.

Joining from Bordeaux are Maelle Garbino, last season's third-highest goalscorer in France, and Ella Palis, while another French international, Lindsey Thomas, arrived from Milan.

Roma have also strengthened, bringing in a raft of players including Japan's Saki Kumagai (Bayern), Austria midfielder Laura Feiersinger (Eintracht) and Canada forward Evelyne Viens (Kristianstads). However, they have lost the experience of Andressa Alves (Houston Dash) and Vicky Losada (Brighton).

In Germany, champions Bayern wrapped up their big signings early, with Pernille Harder (Denmark) and Magdalena Eriksson (Sweden) arriving from Chelsea together. As ever the title is likely to be between them and Wolfsburg, whose main addition was Dutch league top scorer Fenna Kalma from Twente.

This season, incidentally, is the first in which these five leagues, the "big five" of the men's game, are also the top five in UEFA's women's league coefficients, Italy having overtaken Sweden and Czech Republic. As more cash rolls into the sport it is likely to stay that way.

Rubiales reign finally ends

"It started with a kiss, I never thought it would come to this."

So sang Hot Chocolate in their 1982 hit single, and the sentiment has never been truer than for Luis Rubiales. The then-Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) president grabbing hold of *La Roja* striker Jenni Hermoso and kissing her on the lips during the Women's World Cup trophy presentation set off an extraordinary chain of events.

The 46-year-old's behaviour entirely overshadowed the team's triumph. The unimaginable fall-out included Rubiales' mother needing hospital treatment after locking herself in a church and going on hunger strike, the RFEF asking UEFA to sanction them due to government interference (which would have led to the men's and women's teams of Barcelona and Real Madrid being banned from the Champions League), and the federation threatening to take legal action against Hermoso.

Meanwhile, the Spanish prime minister said "Rubiales' apologies are not enough", FIFA suspended Rubiales from all football activities for 90 days, and 81 players, including the entire World Cup-winning squad, said they would not play for Spain while he remained.

By then the fiasco had football agog, making news bulletins around the world and heaping embarrassment upon the Spanish game.

During an extraordinary speech to an emergency federation meeting, at which he had been expected to quit, Rubiales shouted five times from the podium: "I will not resign".

He was enthusiastically applauded by Jorge Vilda but later, as the mood hardened, the World Cup-winning boss also turned, calling Rubiales' behaviour "inappropriate" and "unacceptable" – no matter he had backed Vilda during last year's player rebellion.

This reversal was too late. Vilda's coaching staff had by now resigned in protest, and he was then sacked by a new board and replaced by Montse Tome, a former assistant and the first female to take on the role.

The support for Hermoso had been simply overwhelming – RFEF regional presidents had demanded Rubiales' resignation, England's Sarina Wiegman dedicated her UEFA Women's Coach of the Year award to Spain's players, saying they "deserve to be listened to", while Spain's men also condemned Rubiales' "unacceptable" behaviour. Alvaro Morata, in a statement made on behalf of the Spain squad, pledged "solidarity with the players whose success has been tarnished".

The writing was on the wall for Rubiales when the RFEF, concerned the scandal was imperilling the World Cup 2030 bid, released a statement apologising "to the football world...for the totally unacceptable behaviour of its highest institutional representative during the final of the Women's World Cup and in the moments that followed." Days later Rubiales resigned, stating: "After the quick suspension carried out by FIFA, plus the rest of open proceedings against me, it is evident that I will not be able to return to my position."

Just before the moment of controversy...Hermoso (L) waits to be congratulated by Rubiales

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Europe

NICK BIDWELL

European nations with Germany in sight

September's fixtures further shape the Euro 2024 qualifying picture

Portugal, European champions in 2016, more or less have qualification in the bag after maintaining their 100 per cent record with a hard-fought 1-0 win over Slovakia in Bratislava and a 9-0 home romp against hapless Luxembourg – their biggest-ever victory in 102 years of international football. With maximum points from their first six fixtures in Group J, 24 goals scored and none conceded, the Portuguese have gone about their business with a steely single-mindedness, though, as they must realise, much sterner tests await.

Another nation flying high at perfect altitude is France, who made it five wins out of five in Group B with a comfortable 2-0 victory against the Republic of Ireland at the Parc des Princes. Such was the gulf in class between the teams that the outcome was never in doubt – and it certainly was a night to remember for *Les Bleus* goalscorers, Real Madrid midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni breaking the ice with a sumptuous drive on 19 minutes and substitute Marcus Thuram on target with his first national team goal shortly after the break.

In Group A, Scotland – a team with the organisation and togetherness of a club side – have been faultless in qualification too. Their 3-0 stroll in the park in Cyprus was their fifth straight win and the Tartan Army must already be booking their flights to Germany. Not surprisingly, the Scots' opening goal in Cyprus was scored by Manchester United midfielder Scott McTominay, who now has six strikes to his name in qualifying – only one player currently has more (Belgium's Romelu Lukaku on eight).

Other unbeaten teams experienced mixed fortunes in Matchdays 5 and 6. After four straight victories in Group C, England appeared stale and laboured

Flying form... Portugal continue their perfect qualifying record

Clinical...Scotland's Scott McTominay adds yet another goal to his tally

BELOW: Record breaker...Spain's teenage talent Lamine Yamal

in a 1-1 "away" draw with Ukraine, held in the Polish city of Wroclaw. Energised by the backing of the majority of the 40,000 crowd at the Tarczynski Arena, Ukraine took the lead midway through the first-half when Oleksandr Zinchenko turned in a Yukhym Konoplya cross. The Three Lions equalised a quarter-of-an-hour later through full-back Kyle Walker, his first international goal on his 77th appearance.

Yet to taste defeat in Group D, Croatia efficiently took care of business, beating Latvia 5-0 in Rijeka and winning 1-0 in Armenia. Just to broaden the smile on Croatian faces, group rivals Turkey dropped points, held to a 1-1 home draw in Eskisehir by Armenia.

The 9-0 home romp against hapless Luxembourg was Portugal's biggest-ever victory in 102 years of international football

In Group I undefeated Switzerland remain favourites to top the pool, though they cannot afford to let complacency set in. They were disappointing in a 2-2 draw in Kosovo, short on intensity and carelessly conceding an equaliser deep into stoppage-time to Vedat Muriqi. They did, however, show improvement in a 3-0 home win over Andorra three days later.

Romania are also in contention in Group I. They have not suffered a single defeat yet either and, as they proved when scoring twice at the death to beat Kosovo 2-0, they do know how to force the issue. The win, however, was marred by home fans unfurling a "Kosovo is Serbia" banner, which led to the game being suspended for 50 minutes.

Unvanquished Hungary, currently one of Europe's most-improved sides, took a huge step towards qualification thanks to a shock 2-1 win over Serbia in Belgrade. Barnabas Varga and Willi Orban were on the scoresheet for the Magyars.

The die already seems to be cast in Group F, where Belgium and Austria are in dominant mode, both still unbeaten and both with 13 points from five games. Belgium were somewhat fortunate to win 1-0 in Azerbaijan, but were much more convincing in a 5-0 home win over Estonia on Matchday 6, a game in which central defender Jan Vertonghen celebrated winning his 150th cap with a goal. Austria sent out an unmistakeable message of intent with a 3-1 victory in Sweden, a most impressive display built on a Michael Gregoritsch header and Marko Arnautovic brace.

New Italy coach Luciano Spalletti – brought in to fill the void left by Roberto Mancini's resignation – did not especially enjoy his debut, his *Azzurri* held to a 1-1 draw in North Macedonia; the team, of course, who shattered their World Cup 2022 qualifying hopes. Italy seemed to have done the hard part when Ciro Immobile headed them in front early in the second half, only for jitters and technical errors to kick in, paving the way for the hosts to equalise late on courtesy of a brilliant Enis Bardhi free-kick.

Spalletti's charges would perform much more assuredly on Matchday 6, beating Ukraine 2-1 in Milan, both goals tucked away by Inter midfielder Davide Frattesi.

Elsewhere, there is an almighty battle atop Group G with Slovenia, Denmark, Finland and surprise packages Kazakhstan all separated by just one point and vying for the two automatic qualifying spots.

History was made in Spain's 7-1 thumping of Georgia in Tbilisi, with Barcelona teenager Lamine Yamal becoming the youngest player and goalscorer for *La Roja*. Winger Yamal, aged 16 years and 57 days, came on as a sub for Dani Olmo just before half-time and fired home Spain's seventh late on.

The September window also saw a managerial casualty, with Poland's humiliating 2-0 loss to surprise Group E pacesetters Albania costing Fernando Santos his job. The setback in Tirana was Poland's third defeat in five Euro 2024 qualifiers, leading the former Portugal coach's position to become untenable.

Turn to page 91 for full results and line-ups from Matchdays 5 and 6.

Provocative...Romanian ultras hold anti-Kosovo banners and make offensive chants

South America

TIM VICKERY

Update

And then there were four

Brazilian clubs continue to dominate the Copa Libertadores, with three out of four teams making the 2023 tournament's semi-finals

Cruise control...Palmeiras' Rony celebrates scoring in the 4-0 victory against Deportivo Pereira

Over the course of August in the knockout phase of the Copa Libertadores, 16 teams from seven different countries were whittled down to a last four of Boca Juniors against the Brazilians.

This is a familiar pattern. The last four titles have gone to Brazil, and the last three finals have been all-Brazilian affairs. Argentina have been coming a distant second, but well ahead of the rest of the pack; for six years now the rest of the continent have provided just one semi-finalist.

That is not to say that August came up with no surprises. The biggest shock was the elimination of reigning champions Flamengo, who let a two-goal advantage slip against the aerial power of Paraguay's Olimpia. And last year's beaten finalists Athletico Paranaense fell on penalties to Bolivian altitude specialists Bolivar.

But the shock sides could not come up with a second consecutive triumph against Brazilian opposition. Fluminense rode their luck a little against Argentinos Juniors in the second round, but in the quarter-finals the boldness of coach Fernando Diniz helped them to a 5-1 win over Olimpia, with veteran Argentine striker German Cano establishing himself as the competition's top scorer.

And Bolivar lost home and away to Internacional, spearheaded by new signing Enner Valencia. In the previous round Inter had come through an epic and somewhat controversial penalty shootout – ends were changed during the dispute – against Argentine giants River Plate, whose defence once again let them down. Often fielding seven different nationalities, Inter are the most cosmopolitan of the Brazilian semi-finalists. Their domestic form has been poor, but they could turn that around in time for the semi under recently appointed coach Eduardo Coudet.

The big surprise in the other half of the draw was the elimination of Ecuador's Independiente del Valle by competition debutants Deportivo Pereira of Colombia. Pereira were soon brought back to earth though. In the quarter-finals, they faced Brazil's Palmeiras, who for the third consecutive year had successfully come through a tight meeting with compatriots Atletico Mineiro. There was nothing tight about their game in Colombia. Palmeiras

Nerveless...Edinson Cavani scores a penalty in Boca Juniors' shootout win over Racing

raced into a three-goal lead, won 4-0 and then treated the home leg like a training game, which finished goalless. It is a remarkable fourth straight semi for Abel Ferreira's men, who went on to be champions in 2020 and 2021. His side combine flashes of talent with great defensive resilience, and are favourites to reach yet another final, although the loss through injury of brainy winger Dudu is a cause for concern.

Palmeiras will now meet Boca Juniors, who have not won since 2007 but made the semis in 2019 and 2020 and were beaten finalists in 2018. Their early season form was dreadful and in the Libertadores they were grateful to have been drawn in an easy group. More recently, things have improved under Jorge Almiron. The left-sided Valentin Barco is developing as an interesting talent, Edinson Cavani's arrival has given them a focal point and, crucially, keeper Sergio Romero has been in magnificent shootout form.

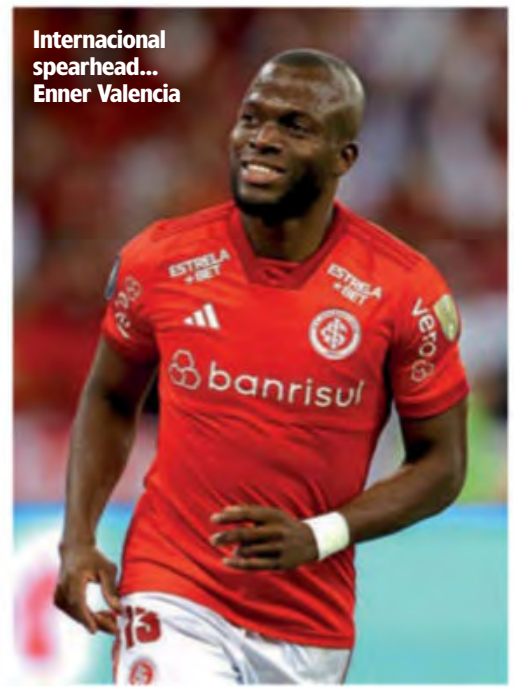
Boca drew all four of their August knockout games, and needed penalties to get past both Nacional of Uruguay and then compatriots Racing. This was a little harsh on Racing, who had staged a memorable comeback against Colombia's Atletico Nacional in the previous round, and who had played a fine campaign. But it sets up what should be an electric semi-final between Boca and Palmeiras, who have had some epic Libertadores encounters in the last 25 years.

If they are to break the recent Brazilian stranglehold, Boca will have to overcome Palmeiras then beat another Brazilian team on Brazilian soil – the final is in Rio's Maracana stadium on November 4. This, of course, is Fluminense's home ground. Among three former champions (the other semi-finalists have at least two wins each) Fluminense would be the new name on the trophy. That quest has led them to turn down Liverpool's big offer for central midfielder Andre – an act of financial irresponsibility in the eyes of Rodrigo Capello, Brazil's foremost expert in football finance. But for the next few weeks, the eyes are on the title rather than the bank balance.

And there could be more Brazilian success in the Copa Sudamericana, the continent's Europa League equivalent. The country will certainly provide one finalist in Montevideo on October 28, since one of the semi-finals is between Corinthians and Fortaleza. The other is a meeting of Ecuador's LDU and Defensa y Justicia from Argentina, who won this title in 2020.

The biggest shock was the elimination of reigning champions Flamengo, who let a two-goal advantage slip against the aerial power of Paraguay's Olimpia

Libertadores top scorer... Fluminense's German Cano



Internacional spearhead... Enner Valencia

Africa

MARK GLEESON

AFCON 2023 finalists confirmed

The final nine slots for January's tournament in the Ivory Coast have been filled amid earthquake tragedy

Underdogs... Gambia will get the chance to repeat their heroics of the last AFCON after their dramatic qualification

Tiny Gambia, who wreaked havoc at the last Africa Cup of Nations finals in Cameroon, will be back for another tournament after qualifying for the finals in the most extraordinary circumstances, both on and off the field.

They were among nine countries who filled the last available slots for January's tournament in the Ivory Coast when the final round of qualifiers were hosted in September.

There was also nervy progress for Cameroon, plus a place for other past champions, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ghana, which ensures that half the 24-team field will be made up of previous winners.

Gambia went into their decisive final Group G qualifier needing only draw at home to Congo, but had to switch the match to Marrakesh in Morocco because their own facilities had been deemed as unsuitable for international competition by the Confederation of African Football (CAF), who have clamped down on many other countries too.

The Gambians were in the city already when the deadly earthquake struck, the epicentre not far from the city and which left their hotel damaged. The quake, in the nearby Atlas Mountains, led to a death toll nearing 3,000 at the time of writing, and was the deadliest in the region in the last six decades.

It forced the players of both Congo and Gambia to sleep outside their rooms, on the pool deck at their respective hotels, and according to both

Host nation...fans of Ivory Coast celebrate their Group H win over Lesotho

Collection...Morocco supporters make donations for the victims of the earthquake ahead of their friendly with Burkina Faso in Lens

coaches left them all anxious and traumatised.

Congo's Paul Put, whose side needed to win to qualify, said his players' mental state was not up to the game and that they were scared about possible aftershocks.

Gambia's outspoken coach Tom Saintfiet was even more emphatic about the game being called off but his public appeals to CAF went unheeded.

This despite the fact that Morocco, who were supposed to play Liberia in Agadir, some 250km away, had their game postponed until October and instead played a friendly against Burkina Faso in Lens.

It seemed the right thing to do in the horrific aftermath of such devastation and loss of life, but bizarrely CAF ordered Gambia and Congo to go ahead with their clash.

They played, after two nights of sleeping outside, and in front of a handful of spectators, and produced a game with as much drama as that which had preceded it.

Congo went 2-0 up, which included an erroneously awarded penalty on the stroke of half-time, and should have wrapped up the result – and their place in the finals – early in the second stanza when Beni Makouana went around the goalkeeper but hit his shot against the post with the net gaping in front of him.

Poor defending allowed Yankuba Minteh (on loan at Feyenoord from Newcastle United) to pull one back in the 77th minute as he swept the ball home at the back post, but Gambia's equaliser did not come until the 90th minute as Muhammed Badamosi climbed above the Congo defence to head home and secure qualification in a Hollywood-like script.

Cameroon had to bear Burundi at home to make sure of their place, and what would have been a routine assignment for the Indomitable Lions in their heyday turned into quite a struggle before they capitalised on defensive errors to win 3-0. In so doing, they eliminated Burundi from the race in their three-team group and ensured that Namibia also qualified. They were the last two countries to book their slots.

Ghana were also far from convincing as they hosted the Central African Republic in Kumasi. Chris Hughton's side needed only draw but the Central Africans had to win and took the lead through stand-in skipper Louis Mafouta as they proved determined to write history and qualify for the first time, even without injured captain and Marseille midfielder Geoffrey Kondogbia.

West Ham United's new signing Mohammed Kudus equalised just before half-time for Ghana and Antoine Semenyo set up the winner as he stripped the visiting defence of the ball and unselfishly passed for the 19-year-old substitute Ernest Nuamah to net the winner from close range.

DR Congo did what was expected of them and won 2-0 at home to Sudan to finish top of Group I, where Mauritania took the second qualifying spot by beating Gabon 2-1.

The Gabonese, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Mario Lemina back in their ranks, needed to win but their goalkeeper was given a straight red card after only five minutes and with his folly went their chances.

The deadly earthquake forced the players of both Congo and Gambia to sleep outside their rooms, on the pool deck at their respective hotels

Tanzania were not given much hope of getting the draw they needed away against 2019 champions Algeria in Annaba, especially given the hosts had won all five of their previous qualifiers and were looking to become the only country to complete the qualifying campaign with a 100 per cent record.

But Tanzania forced a goalless draw, and the point left neighbours Uganda falling one short despite beating Niger 2-0 away.

A final mention must go to Senegal's 15-year-old Amara Diouf, who became the youngest player to represent the nation when he was brought on in the 70th minute against Rwanda. The forward – who won the Golden Boot at the Under-17 AFCON earlier this year – almost scored late on, but goalkeeper Fiacre Ntwari's save wouldn't have taken the shine off an historic achievement for the teenager.

Turn to page 93 for the final results and standings.

Fearful...Gambia's players sleep outside their hotel rooms on pool decks
Credit: Tom Saintfiet

Asia

JOHN DUERDEN

Daring to dream... India are among the teams with a realistic chance of qualifying

Preview

Daring to dream

The expanded 2026 World Cup means that plenty of Asian nations begin the qualifying campaign with hopes of reaching the finals

Less than a year after Australia, South Korea and Japan reached the knockout stages of the 2022 World Cup to give Asia its best-ever showing, the continent is ready to start all over again. On October 12, 20 of the lowest-ranked teams will meet for the first of two legs with the winners going through to the group stage.

Many eyes will be on the clash between Yemen and Sri Lanka. The former has had success at youth level this year and after years of devastating conflict need something to celebrate. Sri Lanka were suspended by FIFA at the time of July's draw, but are now free to play the first-round clash after football's governing body lifted the suspension at the end of August.

Pakistan and Cambodia also stands out. Cambodia are facing up to life without Keisuke Honda as the de facto head coach, while Pakistan are looking forward to playing a rare competitive home game. There have been hardly any since 2015 for various reasons including suspension, political infighting and also because of the format of qualification.

In the past, a defeat in this two-legged game would mean almost no competitive action for the next four years while the rest of Asia played group stage games. The merging of World and Asian Cup qualification now allows those who fall at the first hurdle on the road to North America in 2026 to get another chance for Saudi Arabia in 2027.

The first priority, however, is the World Cup: to win the knockout games and earn a place in one of the nine groups of four in the second round. The top two from those will progress to the final stages. With Asia now having eight finals spots to play for, there are three groups of six teams, with the top two winning automatic berths. The six best third and fourth placed teams will then battle it

Famous underachievers...China's last and only World Cup appearance was back in 2002

out for the two remaining places and the inter-confederational play-off spot.

With the draw for the second round group stage already made, the 20 first-round hopefuls already know who they will be facing should they clear the first hurdle. While perhaps an improving Indonesia are the ones that will see themselves capable of getting through the knockout game against Brunei and then giving the group stage a good go, of the minnows, Singapore and Guam know that they are swimming

India have a real chance of getting to the final stage for the first time in a very long time

into a Group C storm. South Korea are the group's top seeds, now with Jurgen Klinsmann in charge and a spine of Bayern Munich centre-back Kim Min-jae, Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Lee Kang-in and Tottenham Hotspur captain Son Heung-min. China are famous underachievers but still one of the strongest of the second pot and are desperate to at least come close to a second World Cup appearance, and Thailand are probably Southeast Asia's number one, taking the mantle back from Vietnam.

Macau or, more likely, Myanmar, will be fighting with either Syria or North Korea, two difficult teams to beat, to join Japan in the final stage. Either Afghanistan or Mongolia will go into a fascinating Group A where top seeds Qatar have much to prove under new coach Carlos Queiroz, India have a real chance of getting to the final stage for the first time in a very long time, while Kuwait, fallen from their 1970s and '80s golden age, are looking to rebuild.

In Group D, Oman made the final round last time – finishing just a point behind Australia – and should do the same this time. Second looks to be a fight between Kyrgyzstan and Malaysia, two improved teams. Chinese Taipei or Timor-Leste will join them.

There is usually a Southeast Asian-heavy group and this time it is Group F with Vietnam, Philippines and either Indonesia or Brunei taking on Iraq. There is also a Central Asian flavour to Group E with Iran and Uzbekistan favoured to take the first two spots with Turkmenistan and one of Hong Kong or Bhutan trying their best to squeeze in.

In Group I, Australia will take on Palestine for a first competitive meeting and it would not be a surprise to see the Middle Easterners make it through, although Lebanon are always tough to beat.

The weakest group on paper is Group H, where two of the first-round winners, Yemen or Sri Lanka and Nepal or Laos, won't be overly scared of taking on the United Arab Emirates or Bahrain.

With eight automatic spots ready for Asia in 2026, there are more dreams than usual although some will be over almost before they have even begun.

Improving...Indonesia will be confident of beating Brunei in the first round

GROUP STAGE DRAW

GROUP A
- Qatar
- India
- Kuwait
- Afghanistan / Mongolia

GROUP B
- Japan
- Syria
- North Korea
- Myanmar / Macau

GROUP C
- South Korea
- China
- Thailand
- Singapore / Guam

GROUP D
- Oman
- Kyrgyzstan
- Malaysia
- Chinese Taipei / Timor-Leste

GROUP E
- Iran
- Uzbekistan
- Turkmenistan
- Hong Kong / Bhutan

GROUP F
- Iraq
- Vietnam
- Philippines
- Indonesia / Brunei

GROUP G
- Saudi Arabia
- Jordan
- Tajikistan
- Cambodia / Pakistan

GROUP H
- United Arab Emirates
- Bahrain
- Yemen / Sri Lanka
- Nepal / Laos

GROUP I
- Australia
- Palestine
- Lebanon
- Maldives / Bangladesh

Africa

MARK GLEESON

African Football League ready for kick-off

Africa's super league has finally arrived, but not as originally imagined in a scaled-back format

There is better to come, it has been promised, but October's kick-off of the new African Football League (AFL) – the continent's efforts at launching a super league – can only be described as a face-saving exercise.

It arrives almost four years after FIFA president Gianni Infantino first urged African football leaders at the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to start a super league, suggesting 20 permanent clubs in a 24-team league and promising riches of more than $200 million.

It was a vision bought into by his acolyte Patrice Motsepe, when he became CAF president thereafter, also expressing the theory that the riches gained from such a league would spill over to the wider good of the African game, keep the best players on the continent rather than at clubs overseas and make the club product in the region an international commodity.

Those who, at the time, thought this belonged in the realms of fantasy have seen little since to dissuade them as the proposed league was postponed and the entire project outsourced to an Italian company that is running the

Africa Super League...Motsepe and Infantino at the competition's original launch in August 2022

Champions of Africa... Al Ahly of Egypt are one of the eight teams involved

league independently of CAF.

It will, however, now start with eight teams, but played as a month-long knockout tournament and looks anything but super, although CAF are insisting the inaugural edition of the AFL would be a precursor to a fully-fledged competition, featuring the continent's 24 highest-ranked clubs, that will kick off next year.

> **"I am delighted to see this competition taking off...I am looking forward to an even bigger competition next year. More teams, means more stadiums and more cities and more fans fuelling the development of the game"**
>
> **FIFA president Gianni Infantino**

But the platform being laid in October looks precarious, amid a stand-off between CAF and its two major television partners, the satellite broadcasters beIN Sports and South Africa-based SuperSport.

It has been reported that clubs will earn $700,000 each for participating this year, which is nothing to scoff at in an African context but does make Infantino's original promises look rather far fetched.

Even more so, when not a single sponsor was announced when the league was launched at a low-key function in Cairo, available only to view on YouTube. Pointedly, both Infantino and Motsepe were not present, as the eight clubs went into a quarter-final draw.

It all starts on October 20 and will be completed by November 11, with the draw pitting Simba of Tanzania at home in the opening game against reigning African Champions League holders Al Ahly of Egypt.

TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo take on Esperance of Tunisia the next day, followed by Enyimba of Nigeria hosting Wydad Casablanca and then Petro Atletico of Angola up against the South Africans Mamelodi Sundowns. They are all two-legged affairs, as will be the semi-finals, and then the final matches on November 5 and November 11.

But where the matches will be available to view is also up in the air. The games will be given free to terrestrial broadcasters, one of the reasons for a bust-up between CAF and Qatari-based beIN Sports, their primary partner in Arabic-speaking North Africa. CAF claim beIN Sports owe outstanding payments while the Qataris say they have been trying unsuccessfully to engage with CAF over rebates they feel are due to them from the COVID-19 pandemic when soccer was shut down. They also argue that the new African Football League undermines the other products, like the Champions League, that they have already purchased. SuperSport have yet to renew their deal with CAF, showing little faith in the super league being able to sell any further subscriptions.

In Africa there has been none of the uproar that stymied the abortive European Super League project in April 2021, with clubs welcoming promises of stratospheric revenue, but there is also healthy scepticism about whether the league will ever work. There are also few who believe the flowery video messages that Motsepe and Infantino sent to the launch event. "This is a very important step towards ensuring that African club football is highly competitive and exciting to the fans. To ensure that we attract the best African players here, we must pay competitive salaries. Furthermore, we are looking at this competition as an avenue to help our clubs to be self-sustaining and profitable," said Motsepe.

"I am delighted to see this competition taking off. It will help to drive foreign and domestic investment in African football as well as give a platform for the best clubs to compete against each other," added Infantino.

"I am looking forward to an even bigger competition next year. More teams, means more stadiums and more cities and more fans fuelling the development of the game. This is a first in the world," he declared.

QUARTER-FINAL DRAW

Simba v Al Ahly
TP Mazembe v Esperance
Enyimba v Wydad Casablanca
Petro Atletico v Mamelodi Sundowns

Wydad and Mamelodi Sundowns...two of the other AFL participants also met in last season's Champions League semi-finals

New Zealand

SAMINDRA KUNTI

New Zealand Maori fighting for recognition

The country's indigenous people want greater recognition from football's governing bodies

At the headquarters of the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) on the outskirts of New Zealand's capital Auckland, 13 flags, including associate members Kiribati and Tuvalu, fly. The Maori flag is not one of them.

The Maori Football Aotearoa (MFA) is not a member of the confederation. Just like the Hawaiian Football Federation and the Australian Indigenous Football Council (AIFC), the MFA wants self-determination and more control but, in the maze of football politics and because of the FIFA statutes, the road to self-empowerment is difficult. The associations argue that FIFA has the obligation – enshrined in Article 3 of the FIFA Statutes – to uphold all internationally recognised human rights, including the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

During the recent Women's World Cup, the rights of First Nations and Indigenous peoples as well as Maori came into sharper focus: how much self-determination do they enjoy in football? Do Football Australia, NZ Football and FIFA care? A Welcome to Country and Karanga calls preceded every one of the tournament's 64 matches and indigenous flags flew at the stadiums, but the MFA and AIFC called those actions by FIFA out as empty symbolism. They all wanted a proper legacy from the tournament, to benefit their communities and teams.

So did Phillip Parker, the president of the MFA. At 50, born to an English father who played professional football for Rotherham United and a Tongan mother, Parker identifies as Maori as well as Pakeha (a non-Maori person)

Maori Football Aotearoa...MFA players pose for a team shot ahead of one of their recent friendlies

International Festival of Indigenous Football...the Maori team perform the Haka after a match

and Tongan. He introduces himself with the words: "*Ko Tawhiuau te maunga, ko Rangitaiki te awa, ko Ngati Manawa te iwi, ko Rangipo te wehenga o te tuna,*" or: "the mountain is Tawhiuau, the river is Rangitaiki, the people are Ngati Manawa, Rangipo is the place where the eels depart."

Parker grew up with his single mother in Rotorua, a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Auckland. She worked two jobs, but even so, he remembers nights when he "would eat out of a can". Football played an important role in understanding what it meant to be Maori, a journey of self-realisation that was often fraught. He played for Papakura FC before captaining New Zealand at Under-16 level, but the 1970s and '80s, when Parker grew up, were harsh. He'd be sworn at and he gave up on football. "You start to doubt your place in society. I wasn't really sure if I'm Maori enough."

It's when his own daughter Taelor also struggled to get opportunities in football that Parker took decisive action. He campaigned for and then established the MFA after writing to NZ Football, the governing body in the country, with three poignant questions: did the federation keep stats for the number of registered Maori players? Could the federation provide gender-based stats for Maori players? Had there ever been or would there ever be a Maori team? New Zealand Football couldn't reply to Parker's first two questions because they simply didn't keep stats. His last question was met with a firm "no". The replies suggested to Parker that there was simply no interest from the governing body.

Today, his daughter is a member of the backroom staff. The MFA has 254 teenage boys as well as 137 teenage girls in their database. At the senior level around 60 men, as well as 50 women, play. On the eve of the 2023 Women's World Cup, they played a series of friendlies against Australia Indigenous Football, as well as club side Camden Tigers Indigenous Football Program, before hosting Hawaii, a member of CONIFA (Confederation of Independent Football Associations), who featured for the first time on the international stage.

One day, Maori Football Aotearoa president Phillip Parker wants the Maori team to play proper international football

The MFA fosters pathways for Maori players, but, above all, wants to empower by promoting cultural and social inclusion for Maori through the game. "We still have a lot of poor people, a lot of disconnected people, living in a society that wasn't originally us. It got dumped on top of us," says Parker. "We got shifted out of our lands, we sustained ourselves from the land."

In part, Parker refers to the controversial Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, which gave Maori the rights of British subjects and guaranteed Maori property rights and tribal autonomy, in return for accepting British sovereignty and the annexation of New Zealand as a colony in the British Empire. However, to this day, the Treaty remains controversial.

Parker believes it is time for a "very deep conversation around what we want to do" with NZ Football as the fight for more autonomy and funding goes on. NZ Football emphasises partnerships with the MFA, citing among others the Kotuitui schools programme, and points at a large legacy plan. Parker will only believe the legacy plan and its lofty words once the MFA and Maori communities get a firmer voice in the decision-making process; currently Richard Kerr Bell is the only Maori on the NZ Football's executive committee.

One day, Parker wants the Maori team to play proper international football, a vision he shares with Vernon Kapua'ala, the driving force behind Hawaii's team. In the first week of the Women's World Cup, the two teams played a series of friendlies, with growing calls for an indigenous World Cup. The Pacific Islanders prevailed, but their story and struggle have parallels with the Maori: they want to leverage the beautiful game as well not just to reclaim their culture and create pathways but to get adequate funding and a proper place in the football fraternity. The Hawaiians want to break free from US Soccer. Article 11 of the FIFA statutes, however, provides a narrow pathway for FIFA membership. The Maori face the same problem, but for now, the fight goes on.

Maoris v FIFA...FIFA president Gianni Infantino at an official Maori welcome in Auckland ahead of last year's draw for the 2023 Women's World Cup

Gozo

STEVE MENARY

Gozo find their level

The Maltese islanders are feeling optimistic after a positive Island Games debut

Island Games debut...Gozo impressed in Guernsey

Gozo may have failed to get out of the group stage on their first-ever appearance at the Island Games football tournament, but Mark Buttigieg's side showed promise.

The draw was not kind, with Gozo facing three-time gold medallists and eventual winners Jersey in their opener. They lost 1-0, but then went on to beat St Helena 3-0 and Menorca 1-0, before running hosts Guernsey close in the fifth place play-off, losing by a solitary goal.

The Games was Gozo's most successful performance since making their first foray into representative football back in 1999 as Malta's representatives in the first edition of UEFA's Regions Cup, a competition for amateur and non-contract players.

All three games were lost and a decade passed before Gozo entered the Viva World Cup (a competition for teams unaffiliated with FIFA) in 2009, again losing all three games. Gozo hosted the following year's tournament and again lost both group games, before edging past Provence 2-1 to finish fifth.

However, the competition's organisers, the NF Board, subsequently imploded and Gozo eschewed its successor, CONIFA, before returning to the Regions Cup in 2013 as Group 5 hosts. Staging matches in Xewkija, Gozo beat Latvia's Rinuzi-Strong 3-2 and drew with Ialoveni of Moldova but were overwhelmed 6-0 by Russia's Olimp Moscow Oblast.

In 2015, Gozo again hosted and beat Vaasa of Finland 2-0 but failed to register a victory in 2017 even with home advantage, or in Germany in 2019. The 2021 Regions Cup was cancelled due to COVID-19 and last year Gozo joined the Island Games Association.

"I think we have found our level," says Gozo Football Association secretary Tony Grech. "There was some criticism in Malta for joining the IGA, but we have some Gozitans playing in the Maltese league who could not play in the Regions Cup and can come here."

Buttigieg's squad in Guernsey included five current or former Malta Under-21 internationals – Christian Mercieca, Stefan Cassar, Joseph Zammit, Steve Sultana and Ferdinando Apap. The trip to Guernsey was not cheap but it was a worthwhile investment, says GFA treasurer George Cini, who explains: "All the expenses had to be borne by us, all the travel and the hotels."

Gozo's league has been going since the 1930s and was won in 2022-23 by Nadur Youngsters for a record 13th time. Eight sides are in the top tier this season and six in the second division. Gozitan clubs also play in Malta's FA Trophy and SK Vic reached the semi-finals in 2017, which is the best performance yet by a Gozitan club.

Gozo has produced some famous players domestically over the years such as Frank Muscat, Melchior Cremona and more recently Shaun Bajada, who won 33 caps for Malta. Centre-back Apap is halfway to equalling that total and the island's youngsters will soon benefit from a regional development hub being set up by the Maltese Football Association.

> "I think we have found our level"
> Gozo FA secretary Tony Grech

Gozo's representative side hope to play friendlies over Christmas against clubs visiting Malta for training camps, but the next competitive games will be in 2025, when both the Regions Cup and Island Games will be staged.

Participation in the former will be decided by the MFA, while the Island Games is increasingly popular so restricted to 16 sides (with two islands sitting out this year). Providing Gozo survive the inevitable drawing of lots, the island's footballers should be back and in with a chance of a medal in Orkney in 2025.

Team huddle ...Gozo before their victory over St Helena

SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 31

Global diary

Games and dates to pencil in for the month ahead

Women's UEFA Nations League

England's Lionesses are in action again at the end of October, with their Nations League Matchday 3 clash taking place against Belgium at the King Power Stadium on October 27, before travelling to Leuven for the return fixture four days later. Elsewhere in League A, world champions Spain travel to Italy, Germany host Wales, France have a double header with Norway, and the world's newly top-ranked side Sweden take on Switzerland.

Rematch...England took on Belgium in February

Major League Soccer

MLS play-off season is almost upon us, with the regular season drawing to a close on October 21 and the knockout rounds beginning four days later. All eyes have been on Lionel Messi since his arrival at Inter Miami, but runaway leaders FC Cincinnati represent the Eastern Conference's strongest hopes. In the Western Conference, St Louis City are still flying high in their maiden campaign, ahead of last season's champions Los Angeles FC.

Flying high... St Louis City

Copas crunch-time

By the time you're reading this, the four finalists in South America's biggest club competitions may well have already been decided. Both tournaments' semi-finals conclude in the first week of October, with the final of the Copa Sudamericana following on the 28th in Montevideo's Estadio Centenario. A week later, Rio de Janeiro's Maracana is the scene for South American club football's showpiece event: the Copa Libertadores final. We'll reflect on both in our next issue.

Women's Champions League

The 2023 World Cup means that the women's domestic game is still playing catch up. The second round of qualifying for this season's Champions League – where the likes of Wolfsburg, Paris Saint-Germain, Real Madrid, Manchester United and Roma will compete for their spots in the group stage – begins on October 10 and 11, with the second legs following a week later, while the draw for the group stage is on October 20.

5 unmissable matches

- **Newcastle United v Paris Saint-Germain, October 4**
  Newcastle's first Champions League match at St James' Park since the 2003-04 season sees them host PSG in a mouth-watering clash between two of the richest clubs on the planet.

- **Arsenal v Manchester City, October 8**
  If the Gunners are to seriously challenge Manchester City for this season's Premier League title, then this is their opportunity to prove it. Can they step up to the challenge?

- **England v Italy, October 17**
  In Luciano Spalletti's first serious test as Italy coach, his players will return to the scene of their Euro 2020 triumph, and against the same opponents.

UEFA Nations League...Harry Kane was on target in England's 2-1 win away to Italy earlier this year

- **Brighton v Ajax, October 26**
  This is an intriguing Europa League clash between two teams that like to play football – a club with one of the best scouting networks in Europe and another famous for its academy.

- **Barcelona v Real Madrid, October 29**
  The first *Clasico* of the season takes place on the final weekend of October. On Real's last trip to the Camp Nou, in April's Copa del Rey semi-final, they won with an emphatic 4-0 victory.

World Cup qualifiers

While 2026 World Cup qualifying is only just getting underway in Asia, South America is already into the full swing of things with matchdays 3 and 4 taking place in mid-October. The pick of the action from this double header sees qualification hopefuls Colombia take on Uruguay on October 12, with Marcelo Bielsa's side hosting Brazil in Montevideo five days later.

PREMIER LEAGUE 2023-2024

ARSENAL

GOALKEEPERS

1	Aaron **RAMSDALE**	(25) 14.05.98
22	David **RAYA** (Spa)	(28) 15.09.95
31	Karl **HEIN** (Est)	(21) 13.04.02

DEFENDERS

2	William **SALIBA** (Fra)	(22) 24.03.01
4	Ben **WHITE**	(25) 08.10.97
6	**GABRIEL** (Bra)	(25) 19.12.97
12	Jurrien **TIMBER** (Ned)	(22) 17.06.01
15	Jakub **KIWIOR** (Pol)	(23) 15.02.00
17	**CEDRIC** (Por)	(32) 31.08.91
18	Takehiro **TOMIYASU** (Jpn)	(24) 05.11.98
35	Oleksandr **ZINCHENKO** (Ukr)	(26) 15.12.96

MIDFIELDERS

5	Thomas **PARTEY** (Gha)	(30) 13.06.93
8	Martin **ODEGAARD** (Nor)	(24) 17.12.98
10	Emile **SMITH ROWE**	(23) 28.07.00
20	**JORGINHO** (Ita)	(31) 20.12.91
21	Fabio **VIEIRA** (Por)	(23) 30.05.00
25	Mohamed **ELNENY** (Egy)	(31) 11.07.92
29	Kai **HAVERTZ** (Ger)	(24) 11.06.99
41	Declan **RICE**	(24) 14.01.99

FORWARDS

7	Bukayo **SAKA**	(22) 05.09.01
9	Gabriel **JESUS** (Bra)	(26) 03.04.97
11	Gabriel **MARTINELLI** (Bra)	(22) 18.06.01
14	Eddie **NKETIAH**	(24) 30.05.99
19	Leandro **TROSSARD** (Bel)	(28) 04.12.94
24	Reiss **NELSON**	(23) 10.12.99

COACH

	Mikel **ARTETA** (Spa)	(41) 26.03.82

ASTON VILLA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Emiliano **MARTINEZ** (Arg)	(31) 02.09.92
25	Robin **OLSEN** (Swe)	(33) 08.01.90
42	Filip **MARSCHALL**	(20) 24.04.03

DEFENDERS

2	Matty **CASH** (Pol)	(26) 07.08.97
3	**DIEGO CARLOS** (Bra)	(30) 15.03.93
4	Ezri **KONSA**	(25) 23.10.97
5	Tyrone **MINGS**	(30) 13.03.93
12	Lucas **DIGNE** (Fra)	(30) 20.07.93
14	Pau **TORRES** (Spa)	(26) 16.01.97
15	Alex **MORENO** (Spa)	(30) 08.06.93
16	Calum **CHAMBERS**	(28) 20.01.95
17	Clement **LENGLET** (Fra)	(28) 17.06.95
30	Kortney **HAUSE***	(28) 16.07.95
59	Josh **FEENEY**	(18) 06.05.05

MIDFIELDERS

6	**DOUGLAS LUIZ** (Bra)	(25) 09.05.98
7	John **McGINN** (Sco)	(28) 18.10.94
8	Youri **TIELEMANS** (Bel)	(26) 07.05.97
10	Emiliano **BUENDIA** (Arg)	(26) 25.12.96
32	Leander **DENDONCKER** (Bel)	(28) 15.04.95
41	Jacob **RAMSEY**	(22) 28.05.01
44	Boubacar **KAMARA** (Fra)	(23) 23.11.99
47	Tim **IROEGBUNAM**	(20) 30.06.03

FORWARDS

9	Bertrand **TRAORE** (Bfa)	(28) 06.09.95
11	Ollie **WATKINS**	(27) 30.12.95
19	Moussa **DIABY** (Fra)	(24) 07.07.99
22	Nicolo **ZANIOLO** (Ita)	(24) 02.07.99
24	Jhon **DURAN** (Col)	(19) 13.12.03
31	Leon **BAILEY** (Jam)	(26) 09.08.97
71	Omari **KELLYMAN**	(18) 25.09.05

COACH

	Unai **EMERY** (Spa)	(51) 03.11.71

BOURNEMOUTH

GOALKEEPERS

1	**NETO** (Bra)	(34) 19.07.89
12	Darren **RANDOLPH** (Irl)	(36) 12.05.87
20	Andrei **RADU** (Rou)	(26) 28.05.97

DEFENDERS

2	Ryan **FREDERICKS**	(30) 10.10.92
3	Milos **KERKEZ** (Hun)	(19) 07.11.03
5	Lloyd **KELLY**	(24) 06.10.98
6	Chris **MEPHAM** (Wal)	(25) 05.11.97
15	Adam **SMITH**	(32) 29.04.91
25	Marcos **SENESI** (Arg)	(26) 10.05.97
27	Ilya **ZABARNYI** (Ukr)	(21) 01.09.02
37	Max **AARONS**	(23) 04.01.00
43	Ben **GREENWOOD** (Irl)	(20) 20.02.03

MIDFIELDERS

4	Lewis **COOK**	(26) 03.02.97
7	David **BROOKS** (Wal)	(26) 08.07.97
8	Joe **ROTHWELL**	(28) 11.01.95
10	Ryan **CHRISTIE** (Sco)	(28) 22.02.95
14	Alex **SCOTT**	(20) 21.08.03
16	Marcus **TAVERNIER**	(24) 22.03.99
18	Tyler **ADAMS** (USA)	(24) 14.02.99
22	Hamed **TRAORE** (Civ)	(23) 16.02.00
26	Gavin **KILKENNY** (Irl)	(23) 01.02.00
29	Philip **BILLING** (Den)	(27) 11.06.96

FORWARDS

9	Dominic **SOLANKE**	(26) 14.09.97
11	Dango **OUATTARA** (Bfa)	(21) 11.02.02
13	Emiliano **MARCONDES** (Den)	(28) 09.03.95
17	Luis **SINISTERRA** (Col)	(24) 17.06.99
19	Justin **KLUIVERT** (Ned)	(24) 05.05.99
21	Kieffer **MOORE** (Wal)	(31) 08.08.92
24	Antoine **SEMENYO** (Gha)	(23) 07.01.00

COACH

	Andoni **IRAOLA** (Spa)	(41) 22.06.82

BRENTFORD

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mark **FLEKKEN** (Ned)	(30) 13.06.93
21	Thomas **STRAKOSHA** (Alb)	(28) 19.03.95
40	Ellery **BALCOMBE**	(23) 15.10.99

DEFENDERS

2	Aaron **HICKEY** (Sco)	(21) 10.06.02
3	Rico **HENRY**	(26) 08.07.97
4	Charlie **GOODE**	(28) 03.08.95
5	Ethan **PINNOCK** (Jam)	(30) 29.05.93
13	Mathias **JORGENSEN** (Den)	(33) 23.04.90
16	Ben **MEE**	(34) 21.09.89
20	Kristoffer **AJER** (Nor)	(25) 17.04.98
22	Nathan **COLLINS** (Irl)	(22) 30.04.01
30	Mads **ROERSLEV** (Den)	(24) 24.06.99
36	**KIM** Ji-soo (Kor)	(18) 24.12.04

MIDFIELDERS

6	Christian **NORGAARD** (Den)	(29) 10.03.94
8	Mathias **JENSEN** (Den)	(27) 01.01.96
10	Joshua **DASILVA**	(24) 23.10.98
15	Frank **ONYEKA** (Nga)	(25) 01.01.98
24	Mikkel **DAMSGAARD** (Den)	(23) 03.07.00
26	Shandon **BAPTISTE** (Grn)	(25) 08.04.98
27	Vitaly **JANELT** (Ger)	(25) 10.05.98
33	Yegor **YARMOLYUK** (Ukr)	(19) 01.03.04
38	Ethan **BRIERLEY**	(19) 23.11.03

FORWARDS

7	Neal **MAUPAY** (Fra)	(27) 14.08.96
9	Kevin **SCHADE** (Ger)	(21) 27.11.01
11	Yoane **WISSA** (Cod)	(27) 03.09.96
14	Saman **GHODDOS** (Irn)	(30) 06.09.93
17	Ivan **TONEY***	(27) 16.03.96
19	Bryan **MBEUMO** (Cmr)	(24) 07.08.99
23	Keane **LEWIS-POTTER**	(22) 22.02.01
37	Michael **OLAKIGBE**	(19) 06.04.04

COACH

	Thomas **FRANK** (Den)	(49) 09.10.73

BRIGHTON

GOALKEEPERS

1	Bart **VERBRUGGEN** (Ned)	(21) 18.08.02
23	Jason **STEELE**	(33) 18.08.90
38	Tom **McGILL**	(23) 25.03.00

DEFENDERS

2	Tariq **LAMPTEY** (Gha)	(22) 30.09.00
3	**IGOR JULIO** (Bra)	(25) 07.02.98
4	Adam **WEBSTER**	(28) 04.01.95
5	Lewis **DUNK**	(31) 21.11.91
29	Jan Paul **VAN HECKE** (Ned)	(23) 08.06.00
30	Pervis **ESTUPINAN** (Ecu)	(25) 21.01.98
34	Joel **VELTMAN** (Ned)	(31) 15.01.92

MIDFIELDERS

6	James **MILNER**	(37) 04.01.86
7	Solly **MARCH**	(29) 20.07.94
8	Mahmoud **DAHOUD** (Ger)	(27) 01.01.96
11	Billy **GILMOUR** (Sco)	(22) 11.06.01
13	Pascal **GROSS** (Ger)	(32) 15.06.91
14	Adam **LALLANA**	(35) 10.05.88
15	Jakub **MODER** (Pol)	(24) 07.04.99
20	Carlos **BALEBA** (Cmr)	(19) 03.01.04
22	Kaoru **MITOMA** (Jpn)	(26) 20.05.97
40	Facundo **BUONANOTTE** (Arg)	(18) 23.12.04

FORWARDS

9	**JOAO PEDRO** (Bra)	(22) 26.09.01
10	Julio **ENCISO** (Par)	(19) 23.01.04
18	Danny **WELBECK**	(32) 26.11.90
24	Simon **ADINGRA** (Civ)	(21) 01.01.02
28	Evan **FERGUSON** (Irl)	(18) 19.10.04
31	Ansu **FATI** (Spa)	(20) 31.10.02

COACH

	Roberto **DE ZERBI** (Ita)	(44) 06.06.79

BURNLEY

GOALKEEPERS

1	James **TRAFFORD**	(20) 10.10.02
20	Denis **FRANCHI** (Ita)	(20) 22.10.02
29	Lawrence **VIGOUROUX** (Chi)	(29) 19.11.93
49	Arijanet **MURIC** (Kos)	(24) 07.11.98

DEFENDERS

2	Dara **O'SHEA** (Irl)	(24) 04.03.99
3	Charlie **TAYLOR**	(30) 18.09.93
5	Jordan **BEYER** (Ger)	(23) 19.05.00
6	CJ **EGAN-RILEY**	(20) 02.01.03
14	Connor **ROBERTS** (Wal)	(28) 23.09.95
18	Hjalmar **EKDAL** (Swe)	(24) 21.10.98
22	**VITINHO** (Bra)	(24) 23.07.99
28	Ameen **AL-DAKHIL** (Bel)	(21) 06.03.02
44	Hannes **DELCROIX** (Bel)	(24) 28.02.99

MIDFIELDERS

4	Jack **CORK**	(34) 25.06.89
7	Johann **GUDMUNDSSON** (Isl)	(32) 27.10.90
8	Josh **BROWNHILL**	(27) 19.12.95
16	Sander **BERGE** (Nor)	(25) 14.02.98
21	Aaron **RAMSEY**	(20) 21.01.03
24	Josh **CULLEN** (Irl)	(27) 07.04.96
26	Samuel **BASTIEN** (Cod)	(27) 26.09.96
31	Mike **TRESOR** (Bel)	(24) 28.05.99
42	Han-Noah **MASSENGO** (Fra)	(22) 07.07.01

FORWARDS

9	Jay **RODRIGUEZ**	(34) 29.07.89
10	Manuel **BENSON** (Bel)	(26) 28.03.97
15	Nathan **REDMOND**	(29) 06.03.94
17	Lyle **FOSTER** (RSA)	(23) 03.09.00
19	Anass **ZAROURY** (Mar)	(22) 07.11.00
25	Zeki **AMDOUNI** (Sui)	(22) 04.12.00
27	Darko **CHURLINOV** (Mkd)*	(23) 11.07.00
30	Luca **KOLEOSHO** (USA)	(19) 15.09.04
34	Jacob **BRUUN LARSEN** (Den)	(25) 19.09.98
45	Michael **OBAFEMI** (Irl)	(23) 06.07.00
47	Wilson **ODOBERT** (Fra)	(18) 28.11.04

COACH

	Vincent **KOMPANY** (Bel)	(37) 10.04.86

CHELSEA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Robert **SANCHEZ** (Spa)	(25) 18.11.97
13	Marcus **BETTINELLI**	(31) 24.05.92
28	Djordje **PETROVIC** (Srb)	(23) 08.10.99
47	Lucas **BERGSTROM** (Fin)	(21) 05.09.02
50	Eddie **BEACH** (Wal)	(19) 14.11.03

DEFENDERS

2	Axel **DISASI** (Fra)	(25) 11.03.98
3	Marc **CUCURELLA** (Spa)	(25) 22.07.98
5	Benoit **BADIASHILE** (Fra)	(22) 26.03.01
6	**THIAGO SILVA** (Bra)	(39) 22.09.84
14	Trevoh **CHALOBAH**	(24) 05.07.99
21	Ben **CHILWELL**	(26) 21.12.96
24	Reece **JAMES**	(23) 08.12.99
26	Levi **COLWILL**	(20) 26.02.03
27	Malo **GUSTO** (Fra)	(20) 19.05.03
29	Ian **MAATSEN** (Ned)	(21) 10.03.02
33	Wesley **FOFANA** (Fra)	(22) 17.12.00
	Malang **SARR** (Fra)*	(24) 23.01.99

MIDFIELDERS

8	Enzo **FERNANDEZ** (Arg)	(22) 17.01.01
16	Lesley **UGOCHUKWU** (Fra)	(19) 26.03.04
17	Carney **CHUKWUEMEKA**	(19) 20.10.03
23	Conor **GALLAGHER**	(23) 06.02.00
25	Moises **CAICEDO** (Ecu)	(21) 02.11.01
45	Romeo **LAVIA** (Bel)	(19) 06.01.04

FORWARDS

7	Raheem **STERLING**	(28) 08.12.94
10	Mykhailo **MUDRYK** (Ukr)	(22) 05.01.01
11	Noni **MADUEKE**	(21) 10.03.02
15	Nicolas **JACKSON** (Sen)	(22) 20.06.01
18	Christopher **NKUNKU** (Fra)	(25) 14.11.97
19	Armando **BROJA** (Alb)	(22) 10.09.01
20	Cole **PALMER**	(21) 06.05.02
36	**DEIVID** Washington (Bra)	(18) 05.06.05

COACH

	Mauricio **POCHETTINO** (Arg)	(51) 02.03.72

CRYSTAL PALACE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Sam **JOHNSTONE**	(30) 25.03.93
30	Dean **HENDERSON**	(26) 12.03.97
31	Remi **MATTHEWS**	(29) 10.02.94
41	Joe **WHITWORTH**	(19) 29.02.04

DEFENDERS

2	Joel **WARD**	(33) 29.10.89
3	Tyrick **MITCHELL**	(24) 01.09.99
5	James **TOMKINS**	(34) 29.03.89
6	Marc **GUEHI**	(23) 13.07.00
16	Joachim **ANDERSEN** (Den)	(27) 31.05.96
17	Nathaniel **CLYNE**	(32) 05.04.91
26	Chris **RICHARDS** (USA)	(23) 28.03.00
36	Nathan **FERGUSON**	(22) 06.10.00
42	Sean **GREHAN** (Irl)	(19) 08.01.04
	Rob **HOLDING**	(28) 20.09.95

MIDFIELDERS

7	Michael **OLISE** (Fra)	(21) 12.12.01
8	Jefferson **LERMA** (Col)	(28) 25.10.94
10	Eberechi **EZE**	(25) 29.06.98
15	Jeffrey **SCHLUPP** (Gha)	(30) 23.12.92
19	Will **HUGHES**	(28) 17.04.95
23	Malcolm **EBIOWEI**	(20) 04.09.03
28	Cheick **DOUCOURE** (Mli)	(23) 08.01.00
29	Naouirou **AHAMADA** (Fra)	(21) 29.03.02
44	Jairo **RIEDEWALD** (Ned)	(27) 09.09.96
47	Jack **WELLS-MORRISON**	(19) 18.02.04
49	Jesurun **RAK-SAKYI**	(20) 05.10.02

FORWARDS

9	Jordan **AYEW** (Gha)	(32) 11.09.91
11	**MATHEUS FRANCA** (Bra)	(19) 01.04.04
14	Jean-Philippe **MATETA** (Fra)	(26) 28.06.97
22	Odsonne **EDOUARD** (Fra)	(25) 16.01.98

COACH

	Roy **HODGSON**	(76) 09.08.47

EVERTON

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jordan **PICKFORD**	(29) 07.03.94
12	Joao **VIRGINIA** (Por)	(23) 10.10.99
31	Andy **LONERGAN**	(39) 19.10.83
43	Billy **CRELLIN**	(23) 30.06.00

DEFENDERS

2	Nathan **PATTERSON** (Sco)	(21) 16.10.01
5	Michael **KEANE**	(30) 11.01.93
6	James **TARKOWSKI**	(30) 19.11.92
18	Ashley **YOUNG**	(38) 09.07.85
19	Vitaliy **MYKOLENKO** (Ukr)	(24) 29.05.99
22	Ben **GODFREY**	(25) 15.01.98
23	Seamus **COLEMAN** (Irl)	(34) 11.10.88
32	Jarrad **BRANTHWAITE**	(21) 27.06.02

MIDFIELDERS

8	Amadou **ONANA** (Bel)	(22) 16.08.01
16	Abdoulaye **DOUCOURE** (Mli)	(30) 01.01.93
20	Dele **ALLI**	(27) 11.04.96
21	Andre **GOMES** (Por)	(30) 30.07.93
27	Idrissa **GANA GUEYE** (Sen)	(34) 26.09.89
37	James **GARNER**	(22) 13.03.01
62	Tyler **ONYANGO**	(20) 04.03.03

FORWARDS

7	Dwight **McNEIL**	(23) 22.11.99
9	Dominic **CALVERT-LEWIN**	(26) 16.03.97
10	Arnaut **DANJUMA** (Ned)	(26) 31.01.97
11	Jack **HARRISON**	(26) 20.11.96
14	**BETO** (Por)	(25) 31.01.98
28	Youssef **CHERMITI** (Por)	(19) 24.05.04
61	Lewis **DOBBIN**	(20) 03.01.03

COACH

	Sean **DYCHE**	(52) 28.06.71

FULHAM

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marek **RODAK** (Svk)	(26) 13.12.96
17	Bernd **LENO** (Ger)	(31) 04.03.92
23	Steven **BENDA** (Ger)	(24) 01.10.98

DEFENDERS

2	Kenny **TETE** (Ned)	(27) 09.10.95
3	Calvin **BASSEY** (Nga)	(23) 31.12.99
4	Tosin **ADARABIOYO**	(26) 24.09.97
12	Fode **BALLO-TOURE** (Sen)	(26) 03.01.97
13	Tim **REAM** (USA)	(35) 05.10.87
21	Timothy **CASTAGNE** (Bel)	(27) 05.12.95
31	Issa **DIOP** (Fra)	(26) 09.01.97
33	Antonee **ROBINSON** (USA)	(26) 08.08.97

MIDFIELDERS

6	Harrison **REED**	(28) 27.01.95
10	Tom **CAIRNEY**	(32) 20.01.91
18	**ANDREAS PEREIRA** (Bra)	(27) 01.01.96
22	Alex **IWOBI** (Nga)	(27) 03.05.96
26	Joao **PALHINHA** (Por)	(28) 09.07.95
28	Sasa **LUKIC** (Srb)	(27) 13.08.96
35	Tyrese **FRANCOIS** (Aus)	(23) 16.07.00
38	Luke **HARRIS** (Wal)	(18) 03.04.05

FORWARDS

7	Raul **JIMENEZ** (Mex)	(32) 05.05.91
8	Harry **WILSON** (Wal)	(26) 22.03.97
11	Adama **TRAORE** (Spa)	(27) 25.01.96
14	Bobby **DECORDOVA-REID** (Jam)	(30) 02.02.93
19	Rodrigo **MUNIZ** (Bra)	(22) 04.05.01
20	**WILLIAN** (Bra)	(35) 09.08.88
30	**CARLOS VINICIUS** (Bra)	(28) 25.03.95

COACH

	Marco **SILVA** (Por)	(46) 12.07.77

LIVERPOOL

GOALKEEPERS

1	**ALISSON** (Bra)	(30) 02.10.92
13	**ADRIAN** (Spa)	(36) 03.01.87
45	Marcelo **PITALUGA** (Bra)	(20) 20.12.02
62	Caoimhin **KELLEHER** (Irl)	(24) 23.11.98

DEFENDERS

2	Joe **GOMEZ**	(26) 23.05.97
4	Virgil **VAN DIJK** (Ned)	(32) 08.07.91
5	Ibrahima **KONATE** (Fra)	(24) 25.05.99
21	Kostas **TSIMIKAS** (Gre)	(27) 12.05.96
26	Andy **ROBERTSON** (Sco)	(29) 11.03.94
32	Joel **MATIP** (Cmr)	(32) 08.08.91
66	Trent **ALEXANDER-ARNOLD**	(24) 07.10.98
78	Jarell **QUANSAH**	(20) 29.01.03

MIDFIELDERS

3	Wataru **ENDO** (Jpn)	(30) 09.02.93
6	**THIAGO** (Spa)	(32) 11.04.91
8	Dominik **SZOBOSZLAI** (Hun)	(22) 25.10.00
10	Alexis **MAC ALLISTER** (Arg)	(24) 24.12.98
17	Curtis **JONES**	(22) 30.01.01
19	Harvey **ELLIOTT**	(20) 04.04.03
38	Ryan **GRAVENBERCH** (Ned)	(21) 16.05.02
43	Stefan **BAJCETIC** (Spa)	(18) 22.10.04

FORWARDS

7	Luis **DIAZ** (Col)	(26) 13.01.97
9	Darwin **NUNEZ** (Uru)	(24) 24.06.99
11	Mohamed **SALAH** (Egy)	(31) 15.06.92
18	Cody **GAKPO** (Ned)	(24) 07.05.99
20	Diogo **JOTA** (Por)	(26) 04.12.96
50	Ben **DOAK** (Sco)	(17) 11.11.05

COACH

Jurgen **KLOPP** (Ger)	(56) 16.06.67

LUTON TOWN

GOALKEEPERS

1	James **SHEA**	(32) 16.06.91
23	Tim **KRUL** (Ned)	(35) 03.04.88
24	Thomas **KAMINSKI** (Bel)	(30) 23.10.92

DEFENDERS

2	Gabriel **OSHO**	(25) 14.08.98
3	Dan **POTTS**	(29) 13.04.94
4	Tom **LOCKYER** (Wal)	(28) 03.12.94
5	Mads **ANDERSEN** (Den)	(25) 27.12.97
12	Issa **KABORE** (Bfa)	(22) 12.05.01
15	Teden **MENGI**	(21) 30.04.02
16	Reece **BURKE**	(27) 02.09.96
29	Amari'i **BELL** (Jam)	(29) 05.05.94
38	Joseph **JOHNSON**	(17) 09.01.06
45	Alfie **DOUGHTY**	(23) 21.12.99

MIDFIELDERS

6	Ross **BARKLEY**	(29) 05.12.93
8	Luke **BERRY**	(31) 12.07.92
13	Marvelous **NAKAMBA** (Zim)	(29) 19.01.94
14	Tahith **CHONG** (Ned)	(23) 04.12.99
17	Pelly-Ruddock **MPANZU** (Cod)	(29) 22.03.94
18	Jordan **CLARK**	(30) 22.09.93
26	Ryan **GILES**	(23) 26.01.00
28	Albert **SAMBI LOKONGA** (Bel)	(23) 22.10.99

FORWARDS

7	Chiedozie **OGBENE** (Irl)	(26) 01.05.97
9	Carlton **MORRIS**	(27) 16.12.95
10	Cauley **WOODROW**	(28) 02.12.94
11	Elijah **ADEBAYO**	(25) 07.01.98
19	Jacob **BROWN** (Sco)	(25) 10.04.98

COACH

Rob **EDWARDS** (Wal)	(40) 25.12.82

MANCHESTER CITY

GOALKEEPERS

13	Zack **STEFFEN** (USA)	(28) 02.04.95
18	Stefan **ORTEGA** (Ger)	(30) 06.11.92
31	**EDERSON** (Bra)	(30) 17.08.93
33	Scott **CARSON**	(38) 03.09.85

DEFENDERS

2	Kyle **WALKER**	(33) 28.05.90
3	Ruben **DIAS** (Por)	(26) 14.05.97
5	John **STONES**	(29) 28.05.94
6	Nathan **AKE** (Ned)	(28) 18.02.95
21	Sergio **GOMEZ** (Spa)	(23) 04.09.00
24	Josko **GVARDIOL** (Cro)	(21) 23.01.02
25	Manuel **AKANJI** (Sui)	(28) 19.07.95
82	Rico **LEWIS**	(18) 21.11.04

MIDFIELDERS

4	Kalvin **PHILLIPS**	(27) 02.12.95
8	Mateo **KOVACIC** (Cro)	(29) 06.05.94
10	Jack **GREALISH**	(28) 10.09.95
16	**RODRI** (Spa)	(27) 22.06.96
17	Kevin **DE BRUYNE** (Bel)	(32) 28.06.91
20	Bernardo **SILVA** (Por)	(29) 10.08.94
27	Matheus **NUNES** (Por)	(25) 27.08.98
47	Phil **FODEN**	(23) 28.05.00
52	Oscar **BOBB** (Nor)	(20) 12.07.03

FORWARDS

9	Erling **HAALAND** (Nor)	(23) 21.07.00
11	Jeremy **DOKU** (Bel)	(21) 27.05.02
19	Julian **ALVAREZ** (Arg)	(23) 31.01.00

COACH

Pep **GUARDIOLA** (Spa)	(52) 18.01.71

MANCHESTER UTD

GOALKEEPERS

1	Altay **BAYINDIR** (Tur)	(25) 14.04.98
22	Tom **HEATON**	(37) 15.04.86
24	Andre **ONANA** (Cmr)	(27) 02.04.96
40	Radek **VITEK** (Cze)	(19) 24.10.03

DEFENDERS

2	Victor **LINDELOF** (Swe)	(29) 17.07.94
5	Harry **MAGUIRE**	(30) 05.03.93
6	Lisandro **MARTINEZ** (Arg)	(25) 18.01.98
12	Tyrell **MALACIA** (Ned)	(24) 17.08.99
15	Sergio **REGUILON** (Spa)	(26) 16.12.96
19	Raphael **VARANE** (Fra)	(30) 25.04.93
20	Diogo **DALOT** (Por)	(24) 18.03.99
23	Luke **SHAW**	(28) 12.07.95
29	Aaron **WAN-BISSAKA**	(25) 26.11.97
35	Jonny **EVANS** (Nir)	(35) 03.01.88

MIDFIELDERS

4	Sofyan **AMRABAT** (Mar)	(27) 21.08.96
7	Mason **MOUNT**	(24) 10.01.99
8	Bruno **FERNANDES** (Por)	(29) 08.09.94
14	Christian **ERIKSEN** (Den)	(31) 14.02.92
18	**CASEMIRO** (Bra)	(31) 23.02.92
34	Donny **VAN DE BEEK** (Ned)	(26) 18.04.97
37	Kobbie **MAINOO**	(18) 19.04.05
39	Scott **McTOMINAY** (Sco)	(26) 08.12.96
46	**HANNIBAL** Mejbri (Tun)	(20) 21.01.03

FORWARDS

9	Anthony **MARTIAL** (Fra)	(27) 05.12.95
10	Marcus **RASHFORD**	(25) 31.10.97
11	Rasmus **HOJLUND** (Den)	(20) 04.02.03
16	Amad **DIALLO** (Civ)	(21) 11.07.02
17	Alejandro **GARNACHO** (Arg)	(19) 01.07.04
21	**ANTONY** (Bra)	(23) 24.02.00
25	Jadon **SANCHO**	(23) 25.03.00
28	Facundo **PELLISTRI** (Uru)	(21) 20.12.01
47	Shola **SHORETIRE**	(19) 02.02.04

COACH

Erik **TEN HAG** (Ned)	(53) 02.02.70

NEWCASTLE UTD

GOALKEEPERS

1	Martin **DUBRAVKA** (Svk)	(34) 15.01.89
18	Loris **KARIUS** (Ger)	(30) 22.06.93
22	Nick **POPE**	(31) 19.04.92
29	Mark **GILLESPIE**	(31) 27.03.92

DEFENDERS

2	Kieran **TRIPPIER**	(33) 19.09.90
3	Paul **DUMMETT** (Wal)	(32) 26.09.91
4	Sven **BOTMAN** (Ned)	(23) 12.01.00
5	Fabian **SCHAR** (Sui)	(31) 20.12.91
6	Jamaal **LASCELLES**	(29) 11.11.93
13	Matt **TARGETT**	(28) 18.09.95
17	Emil **KRAFTH** (Swe)	(29) 02.08.94
19	Javier **MANQUILLO** (Spa)	(29) 05.05.94
20	Lewis **HALL**	(19) 08.09.04
21	Tino **LIVRAMENTO**	(20) 12.11.02
33	Dan **BURN**	(31) 09.05.92

MIDFIELDERS

7	**JOELINTON** (Bra)	(27) 14.08.96
8	Sandro **TONALI** (Ita)	(23) 08.05.00
11	Matt **RITCHIE** (Sco)	(34) 10.09.89
23	Jacob **MURPHY**	(28) 24.02.95
24	Miguel **ALMIRON** (Par)	(29) 10.02.94
28	Joe **WILLOCK**	(24) 20.08.99
32	Elliot **ANDERSON** (Sco)	(20) 06.11.02
36	Sean **LONGSTAFF**	(25) 30.10.97
39	**BRUNO GUIMARAES** (Bra)	(25) 16.11.97
67	Lewis **MILEY**	(17) 01.05.06

FORWARDS

9	Callum **WILSON**	(31) 27.02.92
10	Anthony **GORDON**	(22) 24.02.01
14	Alexander **ISAK** (Swe)	(24) 21.09.99
15	Harvey **BARNES**	(25) 09.12.97

COACH

Eddie **HOWE**	(45) 29.11.77

NOTT'M FOREST

GOALKEEPERS

1	Matt **TURNER** (USA)	(29) 24.06.94
13	Wayne **HENNESSEY** (Wal)	(36) 24.01.87
23	Odysseas **VLACHODIMOS** (Gre)	(29) 26.04.94
34	Ethan **HORVATH** (USA)*	(28) 09.06.95
38	George **SHELVEY***	(22) 22.04.01

DEFENDERS

2	Giulian **BIANCONE** (Fra)*	(23) 31.03.00
3	Nuno **TAVARES** (Por)	(23) 26.01.00
4	Joe **WORRALL**	(26) 10.01.97
7	Neco **WILLIAMS** (Wal)	(22) 13.04.01
15	Harry **TOFFOLO**	(28) 19.08.95
18	**FELIPE** (Bra)	(34) 16.05.89
19	Moussa **NIAKHATE** (Fra)	(27) 08.03.96
24	Serge **AURIER** (Civ)	(30) 24.12.92
26	Scott **McKENNA** (Sco)	(26) 12.11.96
29	Gonzalo **MONTIEL** (Arg)	(26) 01.01.97
30	Willy **BOLY** (Civ)	(32) 03.02.91
32	Andrew **OMOBAMIDELE** (Irl)	(21) 23.06.02
40	**MURILLO** (Bra)	(21) 04.07.02
43	Ola **AINA** (Nga)	(26) 08.10.96

MIDFIELDERS

5	Orel **MANGALA** (Bel)	(25) 18.03.98
6	Ibrahim **SANGARE** (Civ)	(25) 02.12.97
8	Cheikhou **KOUYATE** (Sen)	(33) 21.12.89
10	Morgan **GIBBS-WHITE**	(23) 27.01.00
12	Andrey **SANTOS** (Bra)	(19) 03.05.04
16	Nicolas **DOMINGUEZ** (Arg)	(25) 28.06.98
22	Ryan **YATES**	(25) 21.11.97
28	**DANILO** (Bra)	(22) 29.04.01
41	Brandon **AGUILERA** (Crc)	(20) 28.06.03
	Harry **ARTER** (Irl)*	(33) 28.12.89

FORWARDS

9	Taiwo **AWONIYI** (Nga)	(26) 12.08.97
11	Chris **WOOD** (Nzl)	(31) 07.12.91
14	Callum **HUDSON-ODOI**	(22) 07.11.00
21	Anthony **ELANGA** (Swe)	(21) 27.04.02
25	Emmanuel **DENNIS** (Nga)*	(25) 15.11.97
27	Divock **ORIGI** (Bel)	(28) 18.04.95

COACH

Steve **COOPER** (Wal)	(43) 10.12.79

SHEFFIELD UTD

GOALKEEPERS

1	Adam **DAVIES** (Wal)	(31) 17.07.92
18	Wes **FODERINGHAM**	(32) 14.01.91
37	Jordan **AMISSAH** (Gha)	(22) 02.08.01

DEFENDERS

2	George **BALDOCK** (Gre)	(30) 09.03.93
3	Max **LOWE**	(26) 11.05.97
5	Auston **TRUSTY** (USA)	(25) 12.08.98
6	Chris **BASHAM**	(35) 20.07.88
12	John **EGAN** (Irl)	(30) 20.10.92
14	Luke **THOMAS**	(22) 10.06.01
15	Anel **AHMEDHODZIC** (Bih)	(24) 26.03.99
19	Jack **ROBINSON**	(30) 01.09.93
20	Jayden **BOGLE**	(23) 27.07.00
27	Yasser **LAROUCI** (Fra)	(22) 01.01.01
33	Rhys **NORRINGTON-DAVIES** (Wal)	(24) 22.04.99
38	Femi **SERIKI**	(21) 28.04.02
39	Sai **SACHDEV**	(18) 09.03.05
40	Jili **BUYABU**	(21) 16.10.01

MIDFIELDERS

4	John **FLECK** (Sco)	(32) 24.08.91
8	Gustavo **HAMER** (Ned)	(26) 24.06.97
16	Oliver **NORWOOD** (Nir)	(32) 12.04.91
17	Ismaila **COULIBALY** (Mli)	(22) 25.12.00
21	**VINICIUS SOUZA** (Bra)	(24) 17.06.99
22	Tom **DAVIES**	(25) 30.06.98
23	Ben **OSBORN**	(29) 05.08.94
25	Anis **BEN SLIMANE** (Tun)	(22) 16.03.01
28	James **McATEE**	(20) 18.10.02
35	Andre **BROOKS**	(20) 20.08.03

FORWARDS

7	Rhian **BREWSTER**	(23) 01.04.00
9	Oli **McBURNIE** (Sco)	(27) 04.06.96
10	Cameron **ARCHER**	(21) 09.12.01
11	Benie **TRAORE** (Civ)	(20) 30.11.02
32	William **OSULA**	(20) 04.08.03
36	Daniel **EJEBBISON**	(20) 11.07.03
39	Antwoine **HACKFORD**	(19) 20.03.04

COACH

Paul **HECKINGBOTTOM**	(46) 17.07.77

TOTTENHAM

GOALKEEPERS

1	Hugo **LLORIS** (Fra)	(36) 26.12.86
13	Guglielmo **VICARIO** (Ita)	(26) 07.10.96
20	Fraser **FORSTER**	(35) 17.03.88
40	Brandon **AUSTIN**	(24) 08.01.99
41	Alfie **WHITEMAN**	(24) 02.10.98

DEFENDERS

12	**EMERSON ROYAL** (Bra)	(24) 14.01.99
15	Eric **DIER**	(29) 15.01.94
17	Cristian **ROMERO** (Arg)	(25) 27.04.98
19	Ryan **SESSEGNON**	(23) 18.05.00
23	Pedro **PORRO** (Spa)	(24) 13.09.99
33	Ben **DAVIES** (Wal)	(30) 24.04.93
35	Ashley **PHILLIPS**	(18) 26.06.05
37	Micky **VAN DE VEN** (Ned)	(22) 19.04.01
38	Destiny **UDOGIE** (Ita)	(20) 28.11.02

MIDFIELDERS

4	Oliver **SKIPP**	(23) 16.09.00
5	Pierre-Emile **HOJBJERG** (Den)	(28) 05.08.95
8	Yves **BISSOUMA** (Mli)	(27) 30.08.96
10	James **MADDISON**	(26) 23.11.96
18	Giovani **LO CELSO** (Arg)	(27) 09.04.96
29	Pape Matar **SARR** (Sen)	(21) 14.09.02
30	Rodrigo **BENTANCUR** (Uru)	(26) 25.06.97

FORWARDS

7	**SON** Heung-min (Kor)	(31) 08.07.92
9	**RICHARLISON** (Bra)	(26) 10.05.97
11	Bryan **GIL** (Spa)	(22) 11.02.01
14	Ivan **PERISIC** (Cro)	(34) 02.02.89
21	Dejan **KULUSEVSKI** (Swe)	(23) 25.04.00
22	Brennan **JOHNSON** (Wal)	(22) 23.05.01
27	Manor **SOLOMON** (Isr)	(24) 24.07.99
36	Alejo **VELIZ** (Arg)	(20) 19.09.03

COACH

Ange **POSTECOGLOU** (Aus)	(58) 27.08.65

WEST HAM UTD

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lukasz **FABIANSKI** (Pol)	(38) 18.04.85
23	Alphonse **AREOLA** (Fra)	(30) 27.02.93
49	Joseph **ANANG**	(23) 08.06.00

DEFENDERS

2	Ben **JOHNSON**	(23) 24.01.00
3	Aaron **CRESSWELL**	(33) 15.12.89
4	Kurt **ZOUMA** (Fra)	(28) 27.10.94
5	Vladimir **COUFAL** (Cze)	(31) 22.08.92
15	Konstantinos **MAVROPANOS** (Gre)	(25) 11.12.97
21	Angelo **OGBONNA** (Ita)	(35) 23.05.88
24	Thilo **KEHRER** (Ger)	(27) 21.09.96
27	Nayef **AGUERD** (Mar)	(27) 30.03.96
33	**EMERSON** (Ita)	(29) 03.08.94

MIDFIELDERS

7	James **WARD-PROWSE**	(28) 01.11.94
8	Pablo **FORNALS** (Spa)	(27) 22.02.96
10	Lucas **PAQUETA** (Bra)	(26) 27.08.97
14	Mohammed **KUDUS** (Gha)	(23) 02.08.00
17	Maxwel **CORNET** (Civ)	(27) 27.09.96
19	Edson **ALVAREZ** (Mex)	(25) 24.10.97
28	Tomas **SOUCEK** (Cze)	(28) 27.02.95
32	Conor **COVENTRY** (Irl)	(23) 25.03.00

FORWARDS

9	Michail **ANTONIO** (Jam)	(33) 28.03.90
18	Danny **INGS**	(31) 23.07.92
20	Jarrod **BOWEN**	(26) 20.12.96
22	Said **BENRAHMA** (Alg)	(28) 10.08.95
45	Divin **MUBAMA**	(18) 25.10.04

COACH

David **MOYES** (Sco)	(60) 25.04.63

WOLVES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jose **SA** (Por)	(30) 17.01.93
25	Dan **BENTLEY**	(30) 13.07.93
40	Tom **KING** (Wal)	(28) 09.03.95

DEFENDERS

2	Matt **DOHERTY** (Irl)	(31) 16.01.92
3	Rayan **AIT-NOURI** (Fra)	(22) 06.06.01
4	Santiago **BUENO** (Uru)	(24) 09.11.98
15	Craig **DAWSON**	(33) 06.05.90
17	Hugo **BUENO** (Spa)	(21) 18.09.02
19	**JONNY** (Spa)	(29) 03.03.94
22	Nelson **SEMEDO** (Por)	(29) 16.11.93
23	Maximilian **KILMAN**	(26) 23.05.97
24	**TOTI** (Por)	(24) 16.01.99

MIDFIELDERS

5	Mario **LEMINA** (Gab)	(30) 01.09.93
6	Boubacar **TRAORE** (Mli)	(22) 20.08.01
8	**JOAO GOMES** (Bra)	(22) 12.02.01
20	Tommy **DOYLE**	(21) 17.10.01
27	Jean-Ricner **BELLEGARDE** (Fra)	(25) 27.06.98
32	Joe **HODGE** (Irl)	(21) 14.09.02
	Bruno **JORDAO** (Por)	(24) 12.10.98

FORWARDS

7	Pedro **NETO** (Por)	(23) 09.03.00
9	Fabio **SILVA** (Por)	(21) 19.07.02
11	**HWANG** Hee-chan (Kor)	(27) 26.01.96
12	**MATHEUS CUNHA** (Bra)	(24) 27.05.99
18	Sasa **KALAJDZIC** (Aut)	(26) 07.07.97
21	Pablo **SARABIA** (Spa)	(31) 11.05.92
30	Enso **GONZALEZ** (Par)	(18) 20.01.05
63	Nathan **FRASER** (Irl)	(18) 22.02.05

COACH

Gary **O'NEIL**	(40) 18.05.83

**Not registered in Premier League squad but still part of the first team and could become eligible again in January (ages as of 29.09.23)*

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Internationals

2026 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

SOUTH AMERICA Section

● *6 direct slots available, plus 1 play-off slot*

Sep 7 – Ciudad del Este
Paraguay 0
Peru 0
Paraguay: Coronel – R. Rojas (Piris 78), Balbuena, G. Gomez, Riveros; Villasanti, Cubas, D. Gomez (Romero 66); Almiron, Avalos (Gonzalez 78), Sosa (M. Rojas 88).
Peru: Gallese – Advincula, Araujo (Corzo 46), Abram, Trauco (Castillo 71); Tapia, Yotun; Polo (Ascues 90), Gonzales (Cartagena 46), Carrillo (Lopez 46); Guerrero.
Sent off: Advincula 45.

Sep 7 – Barranquilla
Colombia 1 (Borre 46)
Venezuela 0
Colombia: Vargas – Munoz, Mina, Lucumi, Machado; Uribe (Barrios 85), Lerma, J. Arias (James 75); Cuadrado (Carrascal 46), Borre (Duran 75), Diaz (Sinisterra 88).
Venezuela: Romo – Gonzalez, Osorio, Angel, Del Pino (Rosales 78); Jose Martinez, Rincon, Herrera (Josef Martinez 59); Savarino (Soteldo 59), Rondon (Marques 78), Machis (Otero 82).

Sep 7 – Buenos Aires
Argentina 1 (Messi 78)
Ecuador 0
Argentina: E. Martinez – Molina, Romero, Otamendi, Tagliafico; De Paul, Fernandez, Mac Allister (Paredes 77); Messi (Palacios 89), La. Martinez (Alvarez 77), Gonzalez (Di Maria 62).
Ecuador: Galindez – Hurtado (Preciado 81), Torres (Mena 81), Arboleda, Pacho, Estupinan; Cifuentes (Ortiz 68), Gruezo, Caicedo; Plata (Rodriguez 67), Valencia.

Sep 8 – Montevideo
Uruguay 3 (De la Cruz 38, 71 Valverde 45+2)
Chile 1 (Vidal 74)
Uruguay: Rochet – Nandez (Mendez 86), S. Caceres, Vina, Piquerez; Valverde, Ugarte, De la Cruz (Carballo 87); Pellistri (B. Rodriguez 71), D. Nunez (Gomez 73), M. Araujo.
Chile: Cortes – Mehssatou (Delgado 67), Medel, Maripan, Suazo; Aravena (Osorio 82), Aranguiz (Vidal 67), Pulgar, Brereton Diaz; M. Nunez (Echeverria 90), Valdes.

Sep 8 – Belem
Brazil 5 (Rodrygo 24, 53, Raphinha 47, Neymar 61, 90+3)
Bolivia 1 (Abrego 78)
Brazil: Ederson – Danilo, Marquinhos, Gabriel (Ibanez 84), Lodi (Caio Henrique 71); Guimaraes (Joelinton 71), Casemiro; Raphinha, Neymar, Rodrygo (Jesus 89); Richarlison (Cunha 71).
Bolivia: Viscarra – Medina, Quinteros, Jusino, Suarez, Fernandez (Roca 58); Bejarano (H. Cuellar 58), Villamil, Cespedes (Ursino 58), Arrascaita (J. Cuellar 76); Martins (Abrego 71).

Sep 12 – Maturin
Venezuela 1 (Rondon 90+3 pen)
Paraguay 0
Venezuela: Romo – A. Gonzalez, Osorio, Angel, Navarro (Makoun 90+6); S. Sosa (Savarino 67), Herrera, Jose Martinez (Casseres 67), Soteldo (Chancellor 90+6); Josef Martinez (Cordova 54), Rondon.
Paraguay: Coronel – R. Rojas (Piris 71), Balbuena, G. Gomez, Alonso; Villasanti, Cubas, Ortiz (Sanchez 46); Almiron (Romero 85), Avalos (C. Gonzalez 59), R. Sosa.

Sep 12 – Quito
Ecuador 2 (Fe. Torres 45+5, 61)
Uruguay 1 (Canobbio 38)
Ecuador: Galindez – Preciado (Hurtado 84), Fe. Torres, Arboleda (Realpe 70), Pacho, Estupinan; Paez (Ortiz 70), Gruezo, Caicedo; Valencia (Rodriguez 90+1), Julio (Mena 70).
Uruguay: Rochet – Nandez, S. Caceres, Vina, Piquerez (M. Olivera 60); Valverde, Ugarte; Canobbio (Pellistri 70), De la Cruz (Carballo 46), M. Araujo (Fa. Torres 70); D. Nunez (C. Olivera 46).

Sep 12 – La Paz
Bolivia 0
Argentina 3 (E. Fernandez 31, Taglifaco 42, Gonzalez 83)
Bolivia: Viscarra – Bejarano, Quinteros, Jusino (Haquin 46), Sagredo (Algaranaz 73), R. Fernandez; Villamil (Villarroel 26), Ursino (H. Cuellar 46), Arrascaita (Saucedo 62); Abrego, Martins.
Sent off: R. Fernandez 39.
Argentina: E. Martinez – Molina, Romero, Otamendi, Tagliafico; De Paul (Palacios 76), E. Fernandez (A. Correa 87), Mac Allister (Paredes 85); Di Maria, Alvarez (La. Martinez 85), Gonzalez (Garnacho 85).

Sep 12 – Santiago
Chile 0
Colombia 0
Chile: Cortes – Catalan (Delgado 73), Medel, Maripan, Suazo; Echeverria, Pulgar, Vidal (Aranguiz 73); Valdes, A. Sanchez, Brereton Diaz (Aravena 76).
Colombia: Vargas – Munoz, Mina (D. Sanchez 23), Lucumi, Machado; Uribe, Lerma, Carrascal (James 58); J. Arias (Quintero 71), Borre (Duran 58), Diaz (Sinisterra 71).

Sep 12 – Lima
Peru 0
Brazil 1 (Marquinhos 90)
Peru: Gallese – Corzo, Tapia, Abram, Trauco (Valera 90+2); Polo (Grimaldo 46), Cartagena (Castillo 68), Yotun, Lopez; Guerrero, Carrillo (Ruidiaz 78).
Brazil: Ederson – Danilo (Vanderson 85), Marquinhos, Gabriel, Lodi; Guimaraes (Joelinton 85), Casemiro; Raphinha (Martinelli 85), Neymar (Veiga 90+3), Rodrygo; Richarlison (Jesus 64).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Argentina	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Colombia	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Uruguay	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Venezuela	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Paraguay	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Peru	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Chile	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Ecuador*	2	1	0	1	2	2	0
Bolivia	2	0	0	2	1	8	0

**Ecuador deducted 3 points*

Oct 12:
Bolivia v Ecuador; Colombia v Uruguay; Brazil v Venezuela; Argentina v Paraguay; Chile v Peru
Oct 17:
Venezuela v Chile; Paraguay v Bolivia; Ecuador v Colombia; Uruguay v Brazil; Peru v Argentina

ASIA Section

● *8 direct slots available, plus 1 play-off slot*

First Round

Oct 12:
Afghanistan v Mongolia; Maldives v Bangladesh; Singapore v Guam; Yemen v Sri Lanka; Myanmar v Macau; Cambodia v Pakistan; Chinese Taipei v Timor-Leste; Indonesia v Brunei; Hong Kong v Bhutan; Nepal v Laos

**Teams drawn first play the first leg at home, with the second legs taking place on October 17*

Second Round

Group A
Qatar, India, Kuwait, Afghanistan/Mongolia

Group B
Japan, Syria, North Korea, Myanmar/Macau

Group C
South Korea, China, Thailand, Singapore/Guam

Group D
Oman, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Chinese Taipei/ Timor-Leste

Group E
Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Hong Kong/ Bhutan

Group F
Iraq, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia/Brunei

Group G
Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Tajikistan, Cambodia/ Pakistan

Group H
United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Yemen/Sri Lanka, Nepal/Laos

Group I
Australia, Palestine, Lebanon, Maldives/ Bangladesh

**Second round to commence November 16*

EURO 2024 QUALIFIERS

Group A

Sep 8 – Tbilisi
Georgia 1 (Chakvetadze 49)
Spain 7 (Morata 22, 40, 66, Kvirkvelia 27 og, Olmo 38, Williams 68, Yamal 74)
Georgia: Mamardashvili – Gocholeishvili (Sazonov 77), Kvirkvelia, Kashia, Azarovi (Dvali 60); Lobjanidze (Davitashvili 46), Aburjania (Chakvetadze 46), Gagnidze (Mekvabishvili 46), Kvaratskhelia; Kiteishvili, Mikautadze.
Spain: Simon – Carvajal, Le Normand, Laporte, Gaya; Gavi (Merino 58), Rodri (Zubimendi 72), Fabian; Asensio (Williams 44), Morata (Joselu 72), Olmo (Yamal 44).

Sep 8 – Larnaca
Cyprus 0
Scotland 3 (McTominay 6, Porteous 16, McGinn 30)
Cyprus: Mall – Karo, Laifis, Roberge; Antoniou (Andreou 80), Kyriakou (Gogic 80), Kousoulos (Ioannou 46), Charalampous (Kakoullis 84), Anderson Correia; Kastanos, Sotiriou (Pittas 46).
Scotland: Gunn – Porteous, Hendry, Tierney; Hickey (Patterson 84), Gilmour (McLean 67), McGregor, Robertson; McTominay (Christie 90), McGinn (Armstrong 83); Adams (Dykes 67).

Sep 12 – Oslo
Norway 2 (Haaland 25, Odegaard 33)
Georgia 1 (Zivzivadze 90+1)
Norway: Nyland – Ajer, Strandberg, Ostigard, Bjorkan; Odegaard, Berg, Aursnes; Strand Larsen (Berge 71), Haaland, Nusa (Solbakken 71).
Georgia: Mamardashvili – Gocholeishvili (Mamuchashvili 46), Kvirkvelia, Kashia, Kalandadze, Azarovi; Davitashvili (Chakvetadze 67), Kiteishvili, Kochorashvili (Mekvabishvili 76); Mikautadze (Zivzivadze 67), Kvaratskhelia.

Sep 12 – Granada
Spain 6 (Gavi 18, Merino 33, Joselu 70, F. Torres 73, 83, Baena 77)
Cyprus 0
Spain: Simon – Carvajal, Le Normand, Laporte, Gaya (Balde 61); Gavi (Baena 76), Rodri, Merino; Yamal (F. Torres 61), Morata (Joselu 46), Williams (Yeremy 46).
Cyprus: Mall – Karo, Gogic, Laifis; Andreou (Panagiotou Filiotis 90+2), Kyriakou (Ioannou 46), Kousoulos (Tzionis 55), Charalampous (Pileas 62), Anderson Correia; Kastanos, Sotiriou (Pittas 62).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Scotland	5	5	0	0	12	1	15
Spain	4	3	0	1	16	3	9
Norway	5	2	1	2	7	8	7
Georgia	5	1	1	3	5	13	4
Cyprus	5	0	0	5	2	17	0

Oct 12: Cyprus v Norway; Spain v Scotland
Oct 15: Georgia v Cyprus; Norway v Spain

Group B

Sep 7 – Paris
France 2 (Tchouameni 19, Thuram 48)
Republic of Ireland 0
France: Maignan – Kounde (Pavard 89), Upamecano, L. Hernandez (Saliba 73), T. Hernandez; Tchouameni, Rabiot; Dembele (Coman 73), Griezmann (Camavinga 90), Mbappe; Giroud (Thuram 26).
Republic of Ireland: Bazunu – Collins, Duffy, Egan; Browne, Molumby (O'Shea 68), Cullen, Stevens (McClean 46); Ogbene (Ebosele 84), Idah (Keane 67, Connolly 78), Knight.

Sep 7 – Eindhoven
Netherlands 3 (De Roon 17, Gakpo 31, Weghorst 39)
Greece 0
Netherlands: Flekken – Geertruida, Van Dijk, Ake (De Vrij 46); Dumfries (De Ligt 85), De Roon (Reijnders 65), De Jong (Veerman 77), Blind; Simons, Weghorst, Gakpo (Lang 65).
Greece: Vlachodimos – Rota (Giannoulis 69), Retsos, Hatzidiakos, Tsimikas; Siopis, Kourbelis (Koulierakis 69); Masouras (Fountas 69), Bakasetas (Bouchalakis 77), Mantalos; Pavlidis (Giakoumakis 73).

Sep 10 – Athens
Greece 5 (Pelkas 9, Mavropanos 23, 82, Masouras 70, 90+1)
Gibraltar 0
Greece: Vlachodimos – Rota (Chatzigiovanis 84), Mavropanos, Hatzidiakos, Giannoulis; Bakasetas, Bouchalakis (Papanikolaou 68), Pelkas (Alexandropoulos 84); Masouras, Pavlidis (Giakoumakis 68), Fountas (Ioannidis 68).
Gibraltar: Coleing – Jolley, R. Chipolina, Sergeant, Mouelhi (Santos 90), Britto; Walker, Hartman (Badr 84), Pozo (Casciaro 90), Ronan; De Barr.

Sep 10 – Dublin
Republic of Ireland 1 (Idah 4 pen)
Netherlands 2 (Gakpo 19 pen, Weghorst 56)
Republic of Ireland: Bazunu – Collins, Duffy, Egan (McGrath 73); Doherty (Ebosele 87), Browne (Smallbone 74), Cullen, McClean (Manning 64); Ogbene, Knight (Armstrong 87), Idah.
Netherlands: Flekken – De Ligt, Van Dijk, Ake; Dumfries, Wieffer (Reijnders 46), De Jong, Blind (Weghorst 46); Gakpo (Lang 81), Malen (Koopmeiners 68), Simons (Berghuis 90).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	5	5	0	0	11	0	15
Netherlands	4	3	0	1	8	5	9
Greece	5	3	0	2	10	5	9
Rep of Ireland	5	1	0	4	5	7	3
Gibraltar	5	0	0	5	0	17	0

Oct 13:
Netherlands v France; Rep of Ireland v Greece
Oct 16:
Gibraltar v Rep of Ireland; Greece v Netherlands

Group C

Sep 9 – Wroclaw
Ukraine 1 (Zinchenko 26)
England 1 (Walker 41)
Ukraine: Bushchan – Konoplya, Zabarnyi, Matvienko (Kryvtsov 46), Mykolenko; Zinchenko (Buyalskyi 76), Stepanenko; Tsygankov, Sudakov (Sydorchuk 65), Mudryk (Nazaryna 90); Yaremchuk (Dovbyk 65).
England: Pickford – Walker, Maguire, Guehi, Chilwell; Henderson, Rice, Bellingham (Rashford 65); Saka (Gallagher 86), Kane, Maddison (Foden 65).

Sep 9 – Skopje
North Macedonia 1 (Bardhi 81)
Italy 1 (Immobile 47)
North Macedonia: Dimitrievski – Manev, Zajkov, Musliu (Serafimov 78); Ashkovski (Dimoski 74), Elezi (Alimi 74), Atanasov (Iljazovski 90+1), Alioski; Bardhi; Miovski, Elmas.
Italy: Donnarumma – Di Lorenzo, Mancini (Scalvini 59), Bastoni, Dimarco (Biraghi 82); Barella, Cristante, Tonali (Raspadori 89); Politano (Zaniolo 46), Immobile, Zaccagni (Gnonto 82).

Sep 12 – Milan
Italy 2 (Frattesi 12, 29)
Ukraine 1 (Yarmolenko 41)
Italy: Donnarumma – Di Lorenzo, Scalvini, Bastoni, Dimarco (Biraghi 58); Frattesi, Locatelli, Barella (Cristante 84); Zaniolo (Orsolini 72), Raspadori (Retegui 72), Zaccagni (Gnonto 58).
Ukraine: Bushchan – Konoplya, Zabarnyi, Kryvtsov, Mykolenko; Stepanenko (Sydorchuk 84), Zinchenko (Buyalskyi 75); Yarmolenko (Mudryk 58), Sudakov, Tsygankov (Vanat 75); Dovbyk (Yaremchuk 58).

Sep 12 – Ta'Qali
Malta 0
North Macedonia 2 (Elmas 5, Manev 41)
Malta: Bonello – Borg, Pepe, Z. Muscat; J. Mbong (Attard 46), Guillaumier (Paiber 89), Kristensen (Yankam 46), Camenzuli; Teuma, Jones (Montebello 46); Nwoko (P. Mbong 72).
North Macedonia: Shishkovski – Manev, Zajkov (Serafimov 79), Musliu; Dimoski (Ashkovski 86), Alimi, Atanasov (Elezi 80), Alioski; Bardhi; Miovski (M. Ristovski 90+3), Elmas.

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	5	4	1	0	16	2	13
Italy	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
Ukraine	5	2	1	2	6	7	7
N. Macedonia	5	2	1	2	7	12	7
Malta	5	0	0	5	1	11	0

Oct 14: Ukraine v North Macedonia; Italy v Malta
Oct 17: England v Italy; Malta v Ukraine

Group D

Sep 8 – Rijeka
Croatia 5 (Petkovic 3, 44, Ivanusec 13, Kramaric 68, Pasalic 78)
Latvia 0
Croatia: Livakovic – Juranovic, Sutalo, Gvardiol (Vida 46), Sosa (Barisic 67); Modric (Vlasic 61), Brozovic (Pasalic 61); Kramaric, Ivanusec, Perisic; Petkovic (Musa 67).
Latvia: Purins – Savalnieks (Krollis 56), Dubra, Cernomordijs, Sorokins; Tobers (Saveljevs 86); Jaunzems (D. Ikaunieks 86), Emsis, J. Ikaunieks (Daskevics 76), Ciganiks; Uldrikis.

Sep 8 – Eskisehir
Turkey 1 (Yildirim 88)
Armenia 1 (Dashyan 49)
Turkey: Gunok – Celik (Muldur 61), Demiral, Soyuncu, Ozkacar (Bulut 72); Yuksek (Kahveci 61); Under, Calhanoglu, Kokcu, Akturkoglu (Yildirim 80); Yilmaz (Dervisoglu 61).
Armenia: Cancarevic – Dashyan, Harutyunyan, Haroyan, Mkrtchyan, Tiknizyan; Bichakhchyan (Serobyan 62), Iwu, Spertsyan, Zelarayan (Briaso 83); Ranos (Adamyan 62).

Sep 11 – Yerevan
Armenia 0
Croatia 1 (Kramaric 13)
Armenia: Cancarevic – Calisir, Harutyunyan, Mkrtchyan; Dashyan, Iwu (Hovhannisyan 58), Spertsyan, Tiknizyan; Bichakhchyan (Serobyan 58), Ranos (Briaso 68), Zelarayan.
Croatia: Livakovic – Stanisic, Sutalo, Gvardiol, Barisic; Modric, Brozovic, Ivanusec (Majer 74); Kramaric (Pasalic 69), Petkovic, Perisic (Musa 84).

Sep 11 – Riga
Latvia 0
Wales 2 (Ramsey 29 pen, Brooks 90+6)
Latvia: Ozols – Savalnieks, Cernomordijs, Dubra, Ciganiks; Jaunzems (Daskevics 86), Emsis, Tobers, J. Ikaunieks; Krollis, Uldrikis (Regza 86).
Wales: Ward – Mepham, Rodon, B. Davies; Roberts, J. James, Ampadu, Williams; Wilson, Ramsey (Brooks 49); Johnson (Bradshaw 87).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	4	3	1	0	9	1	10
Turkey	5	3	1	1	8	6	10
Armenia	5	2	1	2	8	7	7
Wales	5	2	1	2	6	7	7
Latvia	5	0	0	5	3	13	0

Oct 12: Croatia v Turkey; Latvia v Armenia
Oct 15: Turkey v Latvia; Wales v Croatia

Group E

Sep 7 – Prague
Czech Republic 1 (Cerny 56)
Albania 1 (Bajrami 66)
Czech Republic: Pavlenka – Holes, Brabec, Krejci (Chytil 86); Coufal, Soucek, Kral, Provod; Cerny (Hlozek 70), Kuchta (Jurecka 71), Cvancara (Lingr 87).
Albania: Berisha – Hysaj, Ismajli, Djimsiti, Mitaj; Asllani (Bare 69), Ramadani; Asani (Muja 70), Bajrami (Gjasula 85), Seferi (Uzuni 84); Cikalleshi (Daku 58).

Sep 7 – Warsaw
Poland 2 (Lewandowski 73 pen, 83)
Faroe Islands 0
Poland: Szczesny – Bereszynski (S. Szymanski 59), Kedziora, Bednarek, Kiwior; Skoras (Wszolek 46), Krychowiak (D. Szymanski 80), Zielinski, Kaminski (Grosicki 88); Milik (Swiderski 59), Lewandowski.
Faroe Islands: Lamhauge – Rolantsson (Danielsen 74), Askham, Faero, Nattestad, Davidsen; S. Vatnhamar, Joensen (Andreasen 74), G. Vatnhamar (Radosavljevic 88), Bjartalid (Hendriksson 61); J. Edmundsson (K. Olsen 62).

Sep 10 – Torshavn
Faroe Islands 0
Moldova 1 (Rata 53)
Faroe Islands: Lamhauge – Rolantsson (Joensen 46), Faero, G. Vatnhamar, Davidsen; Hendriksson, Andreasen (Askham 80); Bjartalid, J. Edmundsson (Agnarsson 64), Johansen (S. Vatnhamar 64); K. Olsen (Radosavljevic 80).
Moldova: Railean – Revenco, Craciun, Baboglo, Posmac, Marandici; Damascan (Cojocaru 46), Motpan (Bogaciuc 90+3), Rata, Stina (Postolachi 46); Nicolaescu (Platica 77).

Sep 10 – Tirana
Albania 2 (Asani 37, Daku 62)
Poland 0
Albania: Strakosha – Hysaj, Ismajli, Djimsiti, Mitaj; Ramadani; Asani (Muja 70), Bajrami (Gjasula 80), Asllani (Bare 70); Cikalleshi (Daku 62), Uzuni (Seferi 62).
Poland: Szczesny – Bereszynski (Linetty 70), Kedziora, Bednarek (Wieteska 34), Kiwior; Cash, Krychowiak (Skoras 70), S. Szymanski (Swiderski 61), Zielinski, Kaminski (Grosicki 61); Lewandowski.

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Albania	5	3	1	1	8	3	10
Czech Rep	4	2	2	0	7	2	8
Moldova	5	2	2	1	5	5	8
Poland	5	2	0	3	6	8	6
Faroe Islands	5	0	1	4	2	10	1

Oct 12:
Albania v Czech Republic; Faroe Islands v Poland
Oct 15:
Czech Republic v Faroe Islands; Poland v Moldova

Group F

Sep 9 – Baku
Azerbaijan 0
Belgium 1 (Carrasco 38)
Azerbaijan: Magomedaliyev – Mammadov, Mustafazade, Kryvotsyuk, Cafarguliyev (Nabiyev 85); Diniyev (Ozobic 84); Bayramov (Emreli 62), Mahmudov, Isayev (Safarov 62), Sheydayev; Dadashov (Qurbanli 61).
Belgium: Casteels – Castagne, Faes, Vertonghen, Theate; Tielemans (Mangala 66), Onana, Trossard (Lukebakio 79); Bakayoko (Doku 66), Lukaku (Batshuayi 66), Carrasco (Openda 84).

Sep 9 – Tallinn
Estonia 0
Sweden 5 (Gyokeres 18, Kulusevski 24, Isak 39, Quaison 75, Claesson 90+2)
Estonia: Hein – Paskotsi, J. Tamm, Mets; Peetson (Kuusk 69), Miller, Kait, Sinyavskiy (Pikk 46); Ojamaa (Sorga 46), Vassiljev (Poom 84); Anier (Zenjov 46).
Sweden: Olsen – Wahlqvist (Holm 79), Hien (Starfelt 46), Lindelof, Sema; Kulusevski, Cajuste, Gustafson, Forsberg (Karlsson 79); Gyokeres (Quaison 64), Isak (Claesson 64).

Sep 12 – Brussels
Belgium 5 (Vertonghen 4, Trossard 18, Lukaku 56, 58, De Ketelaere 88)
Estonia 0
Belgium: Casteels – Castagne (Siquet 66), Faes, Vertonghen (Debast 84), Theate; Mangala, Onana, Carrasco (Lukebakio 59); Doku, Lukaku (Openda 61), Trossard (De Ketelaere 66).
Estonia: Hein – Baranov, J. Tamm, Mets; Paskotsi, Kait (Miller 76), Poom (Shein 46), Pikk; Vassiljev (Tunjov 61), Anier (Zenjov 67), Ojamaa (Sinyavskiy 61).

Sep 12 – Solna
Sweden 1 (Holm 90)
Austria 3 (Gregoritsch 53, Arnautovic 56, 69 pen)
Sweden: Olsen – Wahlqvist (Holm 75), Hien, Lindelof, Sema; Kulusevski, Cajuste (Claesson 75), Ekdal (Gustafson 64), Forsberg (Karlsson 64); Gyokeres, Isak (Quaison 83).
Austria: A. Schlager – Posch, Lienhart, Alaba, Mwene (Wober 72); Laimer (Seidl 87), Seiwald, X. Schlager (Grillitsch 87), Sabitzer; Arnautovic (Wimmer 72), Gregoritsch (Onisiwo 84).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belgium	5	4	1	0	13	1	13
Austria	5	4	1	0	12	4	13
Sweden	5	2	0	3	11	8	6
Azerbaijan	4	0	1	4	2	11	1
Estonia	5	0	1	4	2	16	1

Oct 13: Austria v Belgium; Estonia v Azerbaijan
Oct 16: Azerbaijan v Austria; Belgium v Sweden

Group G

Sep 7 – Kaunas
Lithuania 2 (Paulauskas 71, Cernych 90+4)
Montenegro 2 (Krstovic 78, Savic 89)
Lithuania: Gertmonas – Lasickas, Lekiatas, Girdvainis, Beneta (Sirvys 46); Verbickas, Gineitis; Novikovas, Golubickas (Slivka 68), Jankauskas (Cernych 68); Paulauskas.
Montenegro: Mijatovic – Marusic, Savic, Tomasevic, Radunovic; Jovovic (Djurdjevic 72), Jankovic (Djukanovic 77), Scekic (Loncar 53), Savicevic (Camaj 46); Mugosa (Jovetic 46), Krstovic.

Sep 7 – Belgrade
Serbia 1 (A. Szalai 10 og)
Hungary 2 (B. Varga 34, Orban 36)
Serbia: V. Milinkovic-Savic – Veljkovic, Gudelj, Pavlovic; Radonjic (Zivkovic 46), Maksimovic (Milenkovic 64), S. Milinkovic-Savic, Kostic (Mladenovic 46); Tadic (Ilic 86); A. Mitrovic, Vlahovic (Jovic 87).
Hungary: Dibusz – Nego, Lang, Orban, A. Szalai, Kerkez (Fiola 70); A Nagy (Kata 77), Styles; Sallai (Csoboth 90+5), Szoboszlai, B. Varga (Adam 77).

Sep 10 – Podgorica
Montenegro 2 (Savic 45+1, Jovetic 90+6)
Bulgaria 1 (Borukov 79)
Montenegro: Mijatovic – Vujacic, Savic, Sipcic (Tomasevic, 26); Marusic, Jankovic (M. Vukcevic 84), Loncar, Bakic (Mugosa 84), A. Vukcevic; Krstovic (Camaj 76), Djukanovic (Jovetic 46).
Sent off: Vujacic 59.
Bulgaria: Dyulgerov – Krastev, Antov, Dimitrov (Borukov 74); Galchev (Stoyanov 63), Gruev, Kraev (Yankov 64), Popov; L. Petkov (Chochev 83), Despodov, Rusev (Delev 46).

Sep 10 – Kaunas
Lithuania 1 (Paulauskas 45)
Serbia 3 (A. Mitrovic 21, 32, 43)
Lithuania: Gertmonas – Lasickas, Lekiatas, Girdvainis (Kazukolovas 46), Beneta (Sirvys 71); Gineitis, Verbickas (Novikovas 46); Slivka, Golubickas (Remeikis 46), Cernych; Paulauskas (Jankauskas 78).
Serbia: V. Milinkovic-Savic – Milenkovic, Veljkovic, Babic; Zivkovic (S. Mitrovic 72), Gudelj, Ilic, Mladenovic (Radonjic 84); Tadic, S. Milinkovic-Savic (Racic 88); A. Mitrovic (Vlahovic 72).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hungary	4	3	1	0	7	1	10
Serbia	5	3	1	1	9	4	10
Montenegro	5	2	2	1	5	5	8
Bulgaria	5	0	2	3	3	8	2
Lithuania	5	0	2	3	4	10	2

Oct 14:
Bulgaria v Lithuania; Hungary v Serbia
Oct 17:
Lithuania v Hungary; Serbia v Montenegro

Group H

Sep 7 – Astana
Kazakhstan 0
Finland 1 (Antman 78)
Kazakhstan: Shatskiy – Bystrov, Marochkin, Alip; Skvortsov (Tapalov 67), Tagybergen, Darabayev (Orazov 67), Vorogovskiy (Dosmagambetov 82); Kuat, Zaynutdinov (Chesnokov 82); Aymbetov (Samorodov 46).
Finland: Hradecky – Hoskonen, Ivanov, Jensen; Alho, Kairinen, Schuller (Kamara 67), Niskanen; Antman (Taylor 85), Pohjanpalo, Pukki (Kallman 67).

Sep 7 – Copenhagen
Denmark 4 (Hojbjerg 26, Maehle 28, Wind 40, Eriksen 90+3)
San Marino 0
Denmark: Schmeichel – Stryger Larsen, Kjaer, Andersen, Maehle; Jensen (Hjulmand 59), Hojbjerg (Hojlund 59), Eriksen; Skov Olsen (Braithwaite 59), Wind (Poulsen 82), Lindstrom (Vallys 72).
San Marino: E. Benedettini – Franciosi, Di Maio, Rossi; Ma. Battistini (D'Addario 66), Golinucci, Capicchioni, Lazzari (Mularoni 86), Tosi (Magi 90); Tomassini (Hirsch 66), Ceccaroli (Vitaioli 46).

Sep 7 – Ljubljana
Slovenia 4 (Sporar 3, 56, Evans 17 og, Sesko 42)
Northern Ireland 2 (Price 7, Evans 53)
Slovenia: Oblak – Karnicnik, Brekalo, Bijol, Janza (Balkovec 85); Stojanovic, Cerin, Elsnik (Lovric 90), Mlakar (Kurtic 74); Sporar, Sesko (Vipotnik 85).
Northern Ireland: Peacock-Farrell – Hume, Evans, McNair, Brown (Cathcart 21, Smyth 76); S. Charles; McMenamin, Price (McCann 64), Saville, Kennedy (Washington 46); D. Charles (Magennis 46).

Sep 10 – Astana
Kazakhstan 1 (Samorodov 27)
Northern Ireland 0
Kazakhstan: Shatskiy – Tapalov (Maliy 71), Bystrov, Marochkin, Alip, Vorogovskiy (Dosmagambetov 46); Zaynutdinov (Aymbetov 88), Beisebekov (Darabayev 71), Tagybergen, Orazov; Samorodov (Kuat 56).
Northern Ireland: Peacock-Farrell – McNair, Ballard, Evans, Hume; S. Charles; McMenamin (Smyth 46), McCann (Magennis 70), Saville (Thompson 46), Kennedy (Jones 63); Washington (D. Charles 81).

Sep 10 – Helsinki
Finland 0
Denmark 1 (Hojbjerg 86)
Finland: Hradecky – Alho (Soiri 62), Hoskonen, Ivanov, Peltola, Niskanen (Uronen 12); Kallman (Taylor 84), Schuller (Antman 62), Kairinen, Kamara; Pukki (Pohjanpalo 62).
Denmark: Schmeichel – Kristensen (Kristiansen 80), Andersen, Christensen, Maehle; Norgaard (Delaney 75), Hojbjerg; Skov Olsen (Kjaer 80), Eriksen, Lindstrom (Hojlund 46); Wind (Poulsen 66).

Sep 10 – Serravalle
San Marino 0
Slovenia 4 (Vipotnik 4, Mlakar 16, Lovric 61, Karnicnik 67)
San Marino: E. Benedettini – Franciosi, Di Maio (Cevoli 88), Rossi; D'Addario, Golinucci, Mi. Battistini (Lunadei 74), Mularoni (Magi 46), Tosi (Capicchioni 46); Vitaioli (Stefanelli 60), Lazzari.
Slovenia: Oblak – Stojanovic (Balkovec 66), Blazic (Drkusic 12), Bijol, Karnicnik; Lovric, Cerin, Elsnik (Kurtic 72), Mlakar; Sporar (Zahovic 72), Vipotnik (Verbic 66).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slovenia	6	4	1	1	13	6	13
Denmark	6	4	1	1	12	5	13
Finland	6	4	0	2	11	4	12
Kazakhstan	6	4	0	2	9	5	12
N. Ireland	6	1	0	5	4	8	3
San Marino	6	0	0	6	0	21	0

Oct 14:
Northern Ireland v San Marino; Slovenia v Finland; Denmark v Kazakhstan
Oct 17:
Finland v Kazakhstan; Northern Ireland v Slovenia; San Marino v Denmark

Group I

Sep 9 – Andorra la Vella
Andorra 0
Belarus 0
Andorra: Alvarez – San Nicolas, Llovera, Alavedra, Cervos; Alaez (M. Garcia 84), M. Vales, M. Vieira (Rebes 59), A. Martinez (Cucu 60); Berto (Lima 90+5), Pujol (E. Vales 59).
Belarus: Plotnikov – Volkov, Politevich, Polyakov; Bykov (Kovalev 65), Ebong, Korzun, Pechenin (Malkevich 88); Savitskiy, Kontsevoy (Bakhar 79), Lisakovich (Morozov 65).

Sep 9 – Pristina
Kosovo 2 (Muriqi 65, 90+4)
Switzerland 2 (Freuler 14, Rrahmani 79 og)
Kosovo: Muric – Vojvoda, Am. Rrahmani, Aliti, Paqarada; V. Berisha (Zhegrova 46), Loshaj (Hadergjonaj 68), Fazliji (Muslija 46), B. Berisha (Krasniqi 54); Rashica (Korenica 80), Muriqi.
Switzerland: Sommer – Fernandes, Schar, Akanji, Rodriguez; Freuler (Sow 84), Zakaria, Xhaka; Shaqiri (Okafor 84), Amdouni (Itten 63), Vargas (Ndoye 63).

Sep 9 – Bucharest
Romania 1 (Alibec 27)
Israel 1 (Gloukh 53)
Romania: Moldovan – Manea, Dragusin, Burca, Bancu; R. Marin, M. Marin (Olaru 64); Sorescu (Morutan 56), Stanciu (Cicaldau 88), Coman (Mihaila 57); Alibec (Puscas 65).
Israel: Glazer – Dasa, Vitor, Goldberg (Lemkin 77), Revivo; Gloukh, Lavi, Dor. Peretz (Abu Fani 73); Yehezkel (Kanichowsky 73), Turgeman (Weissman 62), Solomon.

Sep 12 – Tel Aviv
Israel 1 (Kanichowsky 90+3)
Belarus 0
Israel: Glazer – Dasa (Baribo 78), Lemkin, Vitor, Revivo; Dor. Peretz (Abu Fani 65), Lavi (Safouri 72), Gloukh; Yehezkel (Kanichowsky 65), Weissman (Turgeman 65), Solomon.
Belarus: Plotnikov – Polyakov, Politevich, Volkov; Karpovich (Kovalev 79), Korzun (Bykov 79), Kaplenko, Bocherov (Selyava 59), Pechenin (Malkevich 59); Kontsevoy (Savitskiy 69), Morozov.

Sep 12 – Bucharest
Romania 2 (Stanciu 83, Mihaila 90+3)
Kosovo 0
Romania: Moldovan – Ratiu, Dragusin, Burca (R. Marin 63), Bancu; Screciu; Hagi (Morutan 72), Stanciu, Cicaldau (Olaru 77), Coman (Mihaila 71); Puscas (Alibec 46).
Kosovo: Muric – Vojvoda (Beka 81), Am. Rrahmani, Aliti, Paqarada; Zhegrova (Dresevic 64), V. Berisha (Muslija 54), Loshaj, B. Berisha (Al. Rrahmani 82); Rashica (Hadergjonaj 54), Muriqi.
Sent off: Muriqi 43.

Sep 12 – Sion
Switzerland 3 (Itten 49, Xhaka 84, Shaqiri 90+3 pen)
Andorra 0
Switzerland: Mvogo – Elvedi, Akanji, Rodriguez; Vargas (Bislimi 90+4), Freuler (Sow 67), Xhaka, Steffen; Shaqiri (Aebischer 90+3); Itten (Okafor 81), Amdouni (Ndoye 66).
Andorra: Alvarez – San Nicolas, Llovera, Guillen, Alavedra, M. Garcia; E. Vales (Alaez 76), Rebes, M. Vales (M. Vieira 76), Cervos (Fernandez 88); Lima (Cucu 23, Bernat 88).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	6	4	2	0	17	5	14
Romania	6	3	3	0	9	4	12
Israel	6	3	2	1	7	7	11
Belarus	6	1	1	4	4	11	4
Kosovo	6	0	4	2	5	8	4
Andorra	6	0	2	4	3	10	2

Oct 12:
Andorra v Kosovo; Belarus v Romania; Israel v Switzerland
Oct 15:
Switzerland v Belarus; Kosovo v Israel; Romania v Andorra

Group J

Sep 8 – Zenica
Bosnia & Herzegovina 2 (Dzeko 3, Luchinger 18 og)
Liechtenstein 1 (S. Wolfinger 21)
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Sehic – Milicevic, Hadzikadunic, Kolasinac; Dedic, Nalic (Tahrovic 64), Pjanic (Hadziahmetovic 77), Krunic (Hamulic 90+3), Demirovic (Kodro 90+3); Bilbija (Gazibegovic 77), Dzeko.
Liechtenstein: Buchel – S. Wolfinger (F. Wolfinger 84), Beck, Traber, Malin, Goppel; Luchinger (Hasler 83), Wieser (Meier 69), Sele; Saglam (Notaro 74), Salanovic (Netzer 82).

Sep 8 – Luxembourg
Luxembourg 3 (Chanot 19 pen, Borges Sanches 70, Sinani 90+3)
Iceland 1 (Haraldsson 88)
Luxembourg: Moris – M. Martins (Bohnert 64), Mahmutovic (Gerson 64), Chanot, Pinto; C. Martins; Sinani, Barreiro, Olesen (Jans 64), Borges Sanches (Dardari 90+3); Curci (V. Thill 81).
Iceland: Runarsson – Fridriksson, Palsson, H. Magnusson, Finnsson; S. Magnusson (Oskarsson 46), Traustason, Gudmundsson, Thorsteinsson (Bergmann Johannesson 79); Finnbogason (Anderson 79), Haraldsson.
Sent off: H. Magnusson 73.

Sep 8 – Bratislava
Slovakia 0
Portugal 1 (Fernandes 43)
Slovakia: Dubravka – Pekarik, Vavro, Skriniar, Hancko; Kucka (Benes 75), Lobotka (Hrosovsky 83), Duda; Schranz (Suslov 63), Polievka (Bozenik 64), Haraslin (Duris 83).
Portugal: Costa – Dalot, A. Silva, Dias, Cancelo (Semedo 62); Vitinha (Otavio 63), Palhinha, Fernandes; B. Silva, Ronaldo, Leao (Neto 63).

Sep 11 – Reykjavik
Iceland 1 (Finnbogason 90+1)
Bosnia & Herzegovina 0
Iceland: Runarsson – Sampsted, Palsson, Hermansson, Finnsson; Haraldsson, Traustason, Gudmundsson; Willumsson (Finnbogason 76), Oskarsson, Anderson (Thorsteinsson 76).
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Sehic – Hadzikadunic, Milicevic, Kolasinac; Gazibegovic (Menalo 82), Hadziahmetovic (Pjanic 68), Krunic, Tahrovic (Bilbija 81), Dedic (Civic 86); Dzeko, Demirovic (Kodro 67).

Sep 11 – Faro
Portugal 9 (Inacio 12, 45+3, Ramos 18, 34, Jota 58, 78, Horta 67, Fernandes 83, Felix 88)
Luxembourg 0
Portugal: Costa – Semedo (Cancelo 61), Dias, Inacio, Dalot; Fernandes, Danilo (Neves 75); B. Silva (Horta 61), Jota, Leao (Otavio 75); Ramos (Felix 61).
Luxembourg: Moris – Jans, Mahmutovic, Chanot (Korac 78), Pinto (V. Thill 54); Bohnert (Gerson 46), Sinani, Barreiro, Rupil (S. Thill 46), Borges Sanches; Curci (Carlson 46).

Sep 11 – Bratislava
Slovakia 3 (Hancko 1, Duda 3, Mak 6)
Liechtenstein 0
Slovakia: Dubravka – Tomic (Pekarik 69), Gyomber, Skriniar, Hancko (De Marco 86); Duda (Bero 77), Lobotka (Hrosovsky 77), Benes; Mak (Tupta 70), Bozenik, Haraslin.
Liechtenstein: Buchel – S. Wolfinger (Meier 63), Beck, Traber, Malin (Marxer 90), Goppel; Luchinger (Haas 90), Wieser, Sele; Saglam (Schlegel 73), Salanovic (Netzer 63).

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	6	6	0	0	24	0	18
Slovakia	6	4	1	1	8	2	13
Luxembourg	6	3	1	2	7	16	10
Bosnia & Herz	6	2	0	4	5	9	6
Iceland	6	2	0	4	10	9	6
Liechtenstein	6	0	0	6	1	19	0

Oct 13: Iceland v Luxembourg; Liechtenstein v Bosnia & Herzegovina; Portugal v Slovakia
Oct 16: Bosnia & Herzegovina v Portugal; Iceland v Liechtenstein; Luxembourg v Slovakia

AFCON 2023 QUALIFIERS

Group A

Sep 10 – Uyo
Nigeria 6 (Osimhen 13, 69 pen, 79, Lookman 27, Awoniyi 51, Chukwueze 84)
Sao Tome & Principe 0

Sep 11 – Bissau
Guinea-Bissau 2 (Nito 35, Dju 48)
Sierra Leone 1 (Bakayoko 6)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria (Q)	6	5	0	1	22	4	15
Guinea-Bissau (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
Sierra Leone	6	1	2	3	10	11	5
Sao Tome & P.	6	0	1	5	3	26	1

Group B

Sep 8 – Marrakesh
Burkina Faso 0
Eswatini 0

Sep 10 – Lome
Togo 3 (Denkey 40 pen, 77, Ouattara 87)
Cape Verde 2 (Pina 4, Benchimol 20)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina Faso (Q)	6	3	2	1	8	5	11
Cape Verde (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Togo	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Eswatini	6	0	3	3	3	8	3

Group C

Sep 12 – Garoua
Cameroon 3 (Mbeumo 46, Wooh 59, Aboubakar 90+3)
Burundi 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon (Q)	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Namibia (Q)	4	1	2	1	6	6	5
Burundi	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Kenya*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Kenya disqualified

Group D

Sep 8 – Cairo
Egypt 1 (Fathi 37)
Ethiopia 0

Sep 9 – Lilongwe
Malawi 2 (Saizi 23, Chaziya 88)
Guinea 2 (Camara 56, Sow 58)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt (Q)	6	5	0	1	10	3	15
Guinea (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Malawi	6	1	2	3	4	10	5
Ethiopia	6	1	1	4	5	8	4

Group E

Sep 7 – Lubango
Angola 0
Madagascar 0

Sep 7 – Kumasi
Ghana 2 (Kudus 43, Nuamah 88)
Central African Republic 1 (Mafouta 25)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana (Q)	6	3	3	0	8	3	12
Angola (Q)	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
Central African Rep	6	2	1	3	9	7	7
Madagascar	6	0	3	3	1	9	3

Group F

Sep 7 – Marrakesh
Niger 0
Uganda 2 (Kayondo 17, Ochaya 39)

Sep 7 – Annaba
Algeria 0
Tanzania 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Algeria (Q)	6	5	1	0	9	2	16
Tanzania (Q)	6	2	2	2	3	4	8
Uganda	6	2	1	3	5	6	7
Niger	6	0	2	4	3	8	2

Group G

Sep 8 – Bamako
Mali 4 (Kone 10, Doumbia 29, 57, Dorgeles 82)
South Sudan 0

Sep 10 – Marrakesh
Gambia 2 (Minteh 79, Badamosi 90)
Congo 2 (Makouta 30, Ganvoula 45+1 pen)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali (Q)	6	5	0	1	15	2	15
Gambia (Q)	6	3	1	2	7	7	10
Congo	6	2	1	3	5	10	7
South Sudan	6	1	0	5	5	13	3

Group H

Sep 9 – Moroni
Comoros 1 (Youssouf 45)
Zambia 1 (Daka 71)

Sep 9 – San-Pedro
Ivory Coast 1 (Sangare 16)
Lesotho 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia (Q)	6	4	1	1	12	6	13
Ivory Coast (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Comoros	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
Lesotho	6	0	1	5	1	9	1

Group I

Sep 9 – Nouakchott
Mauritania 2 (Tanjy 30, Kamara 42)
Gabon 1 (Ndong 90+1)

Sep 9 – Kinshasa
DR Congo 2 (Bongonda 8, Mayele 87)
Sudan 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo (Q)	6	4	0	2	11	4	12
Mauritania (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Gabon	6	2	1	3	3	5	7
Sudan	6	2	0	4	3	10	6

Group J

Sep 6 – Benghazi
Libya 1 (Taqtaq 80)
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Jose Elo 62)

Sep 7 – Tunis
Tunisia 3 (Velaphi 60 og, Msakni 82, 90+3)
Botswana 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	1	13
Eq. Guinea (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	7	13
Botswana	6	1	1	4	3	9	4
Libya	6	1	1	4	2	8	4

Group K

Sep 9 – Agadir
Morocco -
Liberia -
Match postponed due to Moroccan earthquake

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa (Q)	4	2	1	1	7	6	7
Morocco (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Liberia	3	0	1	2	3	6	1
Zimbabwe*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Zimbabwe disqualified

Group L

Sep 9 – Maputo
Mozambique 3 (Witi 27, Guima 31, Clesio 90+5)
Benin 2 (Mounie 20 pen, Dossou 50)

Sep 9 – Butare
Senegal 1 (Ma. Camara 66)
Rwanda 1 (Niyonzima 90+6)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal (Q)	6	4	2	0	12	4	14
Mozambique (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	9	10
Benin	6	1	2	3	8	9	5
Rwanda	6	0	3	3	3	9	3

2023-24 CONCACAF NATIONS LEAGUE

League A

Group A

Sep 7 – Port of Spain
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (James 87)
Curacao 0

Sep 7 – Penonome
Panama 3 (Fajardo 9, Moltenis 47 og, Waterman 90+3)
Martinique 0

Sep 7 – Guatemala City
Guatemala 2 (Mejia 15, Altan 78)
El Salvador 0

Sep 10 – Fort-de-France
Martinique 1 (Labeau 48)
Curacao 0

Sep 10 – Guatemala City
Guatemala 1 (Santis 71)
Panama 1 (Davis 7 pen)

Sep 10 – San Salvador
El Salvador 2 (Zavaleta 17, Gil 53)
Trinidad & Tobago 3 (Telfer 22, Shaw 51 pen, Garcia 72)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trinidad & T.	2	2	0	0	4	2	6
Panama	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Guatemala	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Martinique	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Curacao	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
El Salvador	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

Oct 12: Curacao v Panama; Martinique v El Salvador; Trinidad & Tobago v Guatemala
Oct 16: Panama v Guatemala; El Salvador v Martinique; Curacao v Trinidad & Tobago

Group B

Sep 8 – Santo Domingo
Haiti 0
Cuba 0

Sep 8 – St George's
Grenada 1 (Lewis 85)
Suriname 1 (Te Vrede 87)

Sep 8 – Kingston
Jamaica 1 (Gray 64)
Honduras 0

Sep 12 – Santiago de Cuba
Cuba 1 (Pozo 21)
Suriname 0

Sep 12 – Kingston
Jamaica 2 (Ade 51 og, Decordova-Reid 83 pen)
Haiti 2 (Don Deedson 12, 15)

Sep 12 – Tegucigalpa
Honduras 4 (Rodriguez 45+2, 65, Lozano 51, Palma 60 pen)
Grenada 0

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jamaica	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Cuba	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Honduras	2	1	0	1	4	1	3
Haiti	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Suriname	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Grenada	2	0	1	1	1	5	1

Oct 11: Suriname v Haiti; Cuba v Honduras; Grenada v Jamaica
Oct 14: Haiti v Jamaica; Honduras v Cuba; Suriname v Grenada

League B

Group A

Sep 7 – Wilemstad
Sint Maarten 1 (Amatkarijo 51)
Saint Lucia 5 (Poleon 45, 48, 89, Hackett-Fairchild 57, Stanislas 75)

Sep 7 – Basseterre
Saint Kitts & Nevis 1 (Williams 45+2)
Guadeloupe 2 (Archimede 24, Arconte 77)

Sep 10 – Saint-Anne
Guadeloupe 4 (Phaeton 23 pen, Plumain 25 pen, 58, Archimede 40)
Sint Maarten 0

Sep 10 – Gros Islet
Saint Lucia 2 (President 49, Stanislas 75)
Saint Kitts & Nevis 0

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Lucia	2	2	0	0	7	1	6
Guadeloupe	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
St Kitts & Nevis	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Sint Maarten	2	0	0	2	1	9	0

Oct 12: Saint Lucia v Guadeloupe; Sint Maarten v Saint Kitts & Nevis
Oct 15: Guadeloupe v Saint Lucia; Saint Kitts & Nevis v Sint Maarten

Group B

Sep 8 – Santo Domingo
Dominican Republic 0
Nicaragua 2 (Moldskred Belli 38, Acevedo 41)

Sep 8 – Wildey
Barbados 2 (Downey 8, Gale 26)
Montserrat 3 (Taylor 6, 90+8, Shane 81 og)

Sep 11 – Santo Domingo
Dominican Republic 3 (Dorsett 3 og, Romero 25, 64)
Montserrat 0

Sep 11 – Managua
Nicaragua 5 (Smith 11, Perez 40, Moreno 45+1, 76, Montes 69)
Barbados 1 (Gale 89)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nicaragua	2	2	0	0	7	1	6
Dominican Rep	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Montserrat	2	1	0	1	3	5	3
Barbados	2	0	0	2	3	8	0

Oct 13: Montserrat v Nicaragua; Barbados v Dominican Republic
Oct 16: Nicaragua v Montserrat; Dominican Republic v Barbados

Group C

Sep 8 – Devonshire Parish
Bermuda 0
French Guiana 0

Sep 8 – Fort-de-France
Belize 1 (Mensah 18)
Saint Vincent & Grenadines 2 (Simmons 51, Nemhard 79 og)

Sep 12 – Kingstown
Saint Vincent & Grenadines 4 (Anderson 40, 42, 45+2, Sutherland 63)
Bermuda 3 (Bean 21, Coddington 69, Simmons 74)

Sep 12 – Remire-Montjoly
French Guiana 0
Belize 2 (Polanco 64, Cappello 68)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Vincent & Gren	2	2	0	0	6	4	6
Belize	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Bermuda	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
French Guiana	2	0	1	1	0	2	1

Oct 13: Saint Vincent & Grenadines v French Guiana; Belize v Bermuda
Oct 17: French Guiana v Saint Vincent & Grenadines; Bermuda v Belize

Group D

Sep 9 – St John's
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (Deterville 45)
Guyana 5 (Glasgow 14, 29 pen, 87, Benjamin 33, 62)

Sep 9 – Nassau
Bahamas 1 (Julmis 2)
Puerto Rico 6 (Diaz 6, 89, Rivera 14, Burgos 35, 86, Sulia 42)

Sep 12 – Leonara
Guyana 3 (Glasgow 44, Duke-McKenna 54, Benjamin 58)
Bahamas 2 (Julmis 39 pen, 86 pen)

Sep 12 – Nassau
Puerto Rico 5 (Diaz 15, 46, 90, Rivera 39 pen, 43)
Antigua & Barbuda 0

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Puerto Rico	2	2	0	0	11	1	6
Guyana	2	2	0	0	8	3	6
Bahamas	2	0	0	2	3	9	0
Antigua & B.	2	0	0	2	1	10	0

Oct 14: Puerto Rico v Guyana; Bahamas v Antigua & Barbuda
Oct 17: Guyana v Puerto Rico; Antigua & Barbuda v Bahamas

League C

Group A

Sep 7 – The Valley
Anguilla 0
Saint Martin 6 (Raga 6, 32, 38, 40, Segarel 25, Lacazette 70)

Sep 11 – Basseterre
Saint Martin 2 (Raga 75, Casper 88 og)
Bonaire 1 (Martinus 67)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saint Martin	2	2	0	0	8	1	6
Bonaire	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Anguilla	1	0	0	1	0	6	0

Oct 12: Bonaire v Anguilla
Oct 16: Saint Martin v Anguilla

Group B

Sep 7 – Christiansted
US Virgin Islands 2 (McLaughlin 23 og, St Louis 42)
Cayman Islands 2 (Ebanks 16, Gray 47)

Sep 11 – George Town
Cayman Islands 1 (Nunez 6)
Aruba 2 (Ostiana 2, Baly 79)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aruba	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
US Virgin Islands	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Cayman Islands	2	0	1	1	3	4	1

Oct 14: Aruba v US Virgin Islands
Oct 17: Cayman Islands v US Virgin Islands

Group C

Sep 9 – Road Town
British Virgin Islands 3 (Caesar 4, Chalwell 10, 50)
Turks & Caicos 1 (Forbes 45+4 pen)

Sep 12 – Providenciales
Turks & Caicos 0
Dominica 3 (Jules 18, 64, Thomas 90+3)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dominca	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
British Virgin Islands	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Turks & Caicos	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

Oct 12: Dominica v British Virgin Islands
Oct 15: Turks & Caicos v British Virgin Islands

2023 INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES

Group A

Aug 24 – Antananarivo
Madagascar 1 (Tendry 19)
Seychelles 0

Aug 26 – Antananarivo
Madagascar 1 (Tsiry 4)
Mauritius 1 (Au. Francois 73)

Aug 28 – Antananarivo
Mauritius 1 (Au. Francois 17)
Seychelles 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Madagascar (Q)	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Mauritius (Q)	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Seychelles	2	0	0	2	0	2	0

Group B

Aug 24 – Antananarivo
Comoros 0
Mayotte 0

Aug 26 – Antananarivo
Reunion 0
Mayotte 0

Aug 28 – Antananarivo
Comoros 1 (Moudhoiffar 76)
Reunion 1 (Bakary 38)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Reunion (Q)	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Comoros (Q)	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Mayotte	2	0	2	0	0	0	2

Semi-Finals

Aug 31 – Antananarivo
Madagascar 4 (El Hadari 2, 49, 64, Tendry 4)
Comoros 2 (Said Sadad 18, Soloniaina 59 og)

Aug 31 – Antananarivo
Reunion 2 (Vardapin 45+2, Lagourde 48)
Mauritius 1 (Y. Aristide 57)

Third Place Play-Off

Sep 2 – Antananarivo
Comoros 0
Mauritius 2 (Nazira 32, Ferre 73)

Final

Sep 2 – Antananarivo
Madagascar 1 (Tendry 199 pen)
Reunion 0
After Extra-Time

2023 KING'S CUP

Semi-Finals

Sep 7 – Chiang Mai
Thailand 2 (Ayoub 45+3 og, Teerasil 85)
Lebanon 1 (Jradi 57)

Sep 7 – Chiang Mai
Iraq 2 (Al Hamadi 28 pen, Hussein 80 pen)
India 2 (Naorem 16, Hassan Hachim 51 og)
Iraq win 5-4 on penalties

Third Place Play-Off

Sep 10 – Chiang Mai
Lebanon 1 (Al Zein 77)
India 0

Final

Sep 10 – Chiang Mai
Thailand 2 (Mickelson 37, Bordin 82)
Iraq 2 (Hussein 6, Attwan 65)
Iraq win 5-4 on penalties

FRIENDLIES

Aug 27 – Cochabamba
Bolivia 1 (Ursino 52)
Panama 2 (Lenis 12, 87)

Aug 28 – Pirae
Tahiti 9 (Tau 24, Kaspard 29, Tehau 37, Horoi 42, Paama 52, Keck 55, 87, 89, Gitton 76)
Cook Islands 1 (Enoka 74)

Aug 31 – Pirae
Cook Islands 0
Tahiti 3 (Keck 24, Kaspard 32, Morgant 45+1)

Sep 3 – Fort Lauderdale
Guatemala 0
Honduras 0

Sep 3 – Dhaka
Bangladesh 0
Afghanistan 0

Sep 6 – Macau
Macau 0
Bhutan 1 (Namgyel 42)

Sep 6 – Muscat
Oman 2 (Fawaz 22, Al Ghassani 36 pen)
Palestine 1 (Abu Warda 3)

Sep 6 – Ta'Qali
Malta 1 (J. Mbong 58)
Gibraltar 0

Sep 6 – Chengdu
Malaysia 2 (Akhyar 51, Lok 85)
Syria 2 (Mardikian 12, Samia 41)

Sep 7 – Dubai
Bahrain 1 (Youssef 72)
Kuwait 3 (Al Dhefiri 4, Al Khaldi 56, 65)

Sep 7 – Dhaka
Bangladesh 1 (Morsalin 62)
Afghanistan 1 (Sharza 52)

Sep 7 – Al Wakrah
Qatar 1 (Al Haydos 34 pen)
Kenya 2 (Okumu 20, Obiero 90+1)

Sep 7 – Phnom Penh
Cambodia 1 (Sophanat 90)
Hong Kong 1 (Everton 21)

Sep 7 – Plovdiv
Bulgaria 0
Iran 1 (Mohebi 14)

Sep 7 – Oslo
Norway 6 (Nusa 11, Ajer 23, Strand Larsen 31, Bjorkan 41, Finne 79, Vetlesen 90+1)
Jordan 0

Sep 7 – Linz
Austria 1 (Gregoritsch 50)
Moldova 1 (Damascan 3)

Sep 7 – Cardiff
Wales 0
South Korea 0

Sep 8 – Surabaya
Indonesia 2 (Sulistyawan 19, Maulana 90+1)
Turkmenistan 0

Sep 8 – Newcastle
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Bulayhi 68)
Costa Rica 3 (Calvo 12, Ugalde 32, Leal 89)

Sep 9 – Chengdu
China 1 (Lin Liangming 36)
Malaysia 1 (Halim 11)

Sep 8 – Yangon
Myanmar 0
Nepal 0

Sep 8 – Kaohsiung
Chinese Taipei 1 (Shao-Yu Pai 90+4)
Philippines 1 (Reichelt 18)

Sep 8 – Bishan
Singapore 0
Tajikistan 2 (Rakhimov 6, Khanonov 90+6)

Sep 9 – Johannesburg
South Africa 0
Namibia 0

Sep 9 – Wolfsburg
Germany 1 (Sane 19)
Japan 4 (J. Ito 11, Ueda 22, Asano 90, Tanaka 90+2)

Sep 9 – Arlington
Mexico 2 (Jimenez 69 pen, Huerta 83)
Australia 2 (Souttar 16, Boyle 63 pen)

Sep 9 – St Louis
USA 3 (Weah 4, Pepi 90+1, Pulisic 90+5 pen)
Uzbekistan 0

Sep 10 – Budapest
Hungary 1 (Sallai 52)
Czech Republic 1 (Jurecka 63)

Sep 11 – Nam Dinh
Vietnam 2 (Nguyen Cong Phuong 61, Pham Tuan Hai 78)
Palestine 0

Sep 11 – Yangon
Myanmar 1 (Win Naing Tun 86)
Nepal 0

Sep 11 – Hong Kong
Hong Kong 10 (Everton 12, 59, Tan Chun Lok 20, Helio 41, Fernando 51, Wong Wai 56, Chan Siu Kwan 64, 83, Poon Pui Hin 84, 87)
Brunei 0

Sep 11 – Phnom Penh
Cambodia 4 (Chanthea 19, 21, Visal 40, Bunheing 79)
Macau 0

Sep 12 – Manila
Philippines 2 (Rasmussen 74, Rontini 81)
Afghanistan 1 (Popalzay 64)

Sep 12 – Dubai
Bahrain 1 (Marhoon 13)
Turkmenistan 1 (Charyyew 28)

Sep 12 – Nairobi
Kenya 0
South Sudan 1 (Okello 2)

Sep 12 – Cairo
Egypt 1 (Kamal 34)
Tunisia 3 (Laidouni 3, Fathy 8 og, Rafia 90+5)

Sep 12 – Atlanta
Mexico 3 (Jimenez 21, 81, Antuna 88)
Uzbekistan 3 (Abdukholikov 18, Turg'unboyev 45+1, Shukurov 90+2)

Sep 12 – Baku
Azerbaijan 2 (Mahmudov 45+1 pen, Dadashov 79)
Jordan 1 (Al Rashdan 57)

Sep 12 – Chengdu
China 0
Syria 1 (Kroma 59)

Sep 12 – Genk
Japan 4 (A. Ito 15, Nakamura, 28, 36, J. Ito 78 pen)
Turkey 2 (Kabak 44, Yildirim 61)

Sep 12 – Johannesburg
South Africa 1 (Foster 25)
Congo DR 0

Sep 12 – Newcastle
Saudi Arabia 0
South Korea 1 (Cho Gue-sung 32)

Sep 12 – Lens
Morocco 1 (Ounahi 36)
Burkina Faso 0

Sep 12 – Glasgow
Scotland 1 (Maguire 67 og)
England 3 (Foden 32, Bellingham 35, Kane 81)

Sep 12 – Zagreb
Costa Rica 1 (Cascante 64)
United Arab Emirates 4 (Al Ghassani 16, 53 Caio 23, Salmin 38)

Sep 12 – Accra
Ghana 3 (Nuamah 52, Kudus 59, J. Ayew 82)
Liberia 1 (Teah 90+1)

Sep 12 – Tehran
Iran 4 (Taremi 8, 16, Moharrami 21, Moghanlou 87)
Angola 0

Sep 12 – Dortmund
Germany 2 (Muller 4, Sane 87)
France 1 (Griezmann 89 pen)

Sep 12 – Al Wakrah
Qatar 1 (Alaaeldin 70)
Russia 1 (Soldatenkov 90)

Sep 12 – Diamniadio
Senegal 0
Algeria 1 (Chaibi 64)

Sep 12 – Bishan
Singapore 3 (Song Ui-young 42 pen, Tan 65, Anuar 81)
Chinese Taipei 1 (Samuel 29)

Sep 12 – Minnesota
USA 4 (Balogun 13, Aaronson 60, Pepi 79, Al Braiki 81 og)
Oman 0

Club Football

WORLD

2023 FIFA CLUB WORLD CUP

Finals Draw

First Round

Dec 13: Al Ittihad (KSA) v Auckland City (Nzl)

Second Round

Dec 15:
Leon (Mex) v Urawa Red Diamonds (Jpn); Al Ahly (Egy) v Al Ittihad (KSA) or Auckland City (Nzl)

Semi-Finals

Dec 18: Al Ahly (Egy) or Al Ittihad (KSA) or Auckland City (Nzl) v CONMEBOL winner
Dec 19: Leon (Mex) or Urawa Red Diamonds (Jpn) v Manchester City (Eng)

Third Place Match

Dec 22: Semi-final losers

Final

Dec 22: Semi-final winners

EUROPE

2023-24 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Play-Offs

Aug 22-23:
Rangers (Sco) 2-2 PSV (Ned); Antwerp (Bel) 1-0 AEK Athens (Gre); Rakow Czestochowa (Pol) 0-1 Copenhagen (Den); Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 0-0 Young Boys (Sui); Molde (Nor) 2-3 Galatasaray (Tur); Braga (Por) 2-1 Panathinaikos (Gre)

Aug 29-30:
Panathinaikos (Gre) 0-1 Braga (Por) (agg 1-3); Galatasaray (Tur) 2-1 Molde (Nor) (agg 5-3); Young Boys (Sui) 3-0 Maccabi Haifa (Isr) (agg 3-0); AEK Athens (Gre) 1-2 Antwerp (Bel) (agg 1-3); Copenhagen (Den) 1-1 Rakow Czestochowa (Pol) (agg 2-1); PSV (Ned) 5-1 Rangers (Sco) (agg 7-3)

Group Stage Draw

Group A
Bayern Munich (Ger), Manchester United (Eng), Copenhagen (Den), Galatasaray (Tur)

Group B
Sevilla (Spa), Arsenal (Eng), PSV (Ned), Lens (Fra)

Group C
Napoli (Ita), Real Madrid (Spa), Braga (Por), Union Berlin (Ger)

Group D
Benfica (Por), Internazionale (Ita), Red Bull Salzburg (Aut), Real Sociedad (Spa)

Group E
Feyenoord (Ned), Atletico Madrid (Spa), Lazio (Ita), Celtic (Sco)

Group F
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra), Borussia Dortmund (Ger), Milan (Ita), Newcastle United (Eng)

Group G
Manchester City (Eng), RB Leipzig (Ger), Red Star Belgrade (Srb), Young Boys (Sui)

Group H
Barcelona (Spa), Porto (Por), Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr), Antwerp (Bel)

**Group stage commenced September 19*

2023-24 UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Play-Offs

Aug 24:
Slavia Prague (Cze) 2-0 Zorya Luhansk (Ukr); Olympiakos (Gre) 3-1 Cukaricki (Srb); Union Saint-Gilloise (Bel) 2-0 Lugano (Sui); Ludogorets (Bul) 1-4 Ajax (Ned); BK Hacken (Swe) 2-2 Aberdeen (Sco); LASK (Aut) 2-1 Zrinjski Mostar (Bih); KI Klaksvik (Fro) 1-1 Sheriff Tiraspol (Mda); Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn) 0-2 Qarabag (Aze); Slovan Bratislava (Svk) 2-1 Aris Limassol (Cyp); Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 3-1 Sparta Prague (Cze)

Aug 31:
Zorya Luhansk (Ukr) 2-1 Slavia Prague (Cze) (agg 2-3); Cukaricki (Srb) 0-3 Olympiakos (Gre) (agg 1-6); Lugano (Sui) 0-1 Union Saint-Gilloise (Bel) (agg 0-3); Ajax (Ned) 0-1 Ludogorets (Bul) (agg 4-2); Aberdeen (Sco) 1-3 BK Hacken (Swe) (agg 3-5); Zrinjski Mostar (Bih) 1-1 LASK (Aut) (agg 2-3); Sheriff Tiraspol (Mda) 2-1 KI Klaksvik (Fro) (agg 3-2); Qarabag (Aze) 1-1 Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn) (agg 3-1); Aris Limassol (Cyp) 6-2 Slovan Bratislava (Svk) (agg 7-4); Sparta Prague (Cze) 4-1 Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) (agg 5-4)

Group Stage Draw

Group A
West Ham United (Eng), Olympiakos (Gre), Freiburg (Ger), TSC (Srb)

Group B
Ajax (Ned), Marseille (Fra), Brighton & Hove Albion (Eng), AEK Athens (Gre)

Group C
Rangers (Sco), Real Betis (Spa), Sparta Prague (Cze), Aris Limassol (Cyp)

Group D
Atalanta (Ita), Sporting (Por), Sturm Graz (Aut), Rakow Czestochowa (Pol)

Group E
Liverpool (Liv), LASK (Aut), Union Saint-Gilloise (Bel), Toulouse (Fra)

Group F
Villarreal (Spa), Rennes (Fra), Maccabi Haifa (Isr), Panathinaikos (Gre)

Group G
Roma (Ita), Slavia Prague (Cze), Sheriff Tiraspol (Mda), Servette (Sui)

Group H
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger), Qarabag (Aze), Molde (Nor), BK Hacken (Swe)

**Group stage commenced September 21*

2023-24 UEFA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Play-Offs

Aug 23-24:
Spartak Trnava (Svk) 1-1 Dnipro-1 (Ukr); Hibernian (Sco) 0-5 Aston Villa (Eng); Ballkani (Kos) 4-1 BATE Borisov (Blr); Zalgiris (Ltu) 0-4 Ferencvaros (Hun); Struga (Mkd) 0-1 Breidablik (Isl); Farul Constanta (Rou) 2-1 HJK (Fin); Astana (Kaz) 1-0 Partizani (Alb); Levski Sofia (Bul) 1-1 Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger); Gent (Bel) 2-0 APOEL (Cyp); Sepsi (Rou) 2-2 Bodo/Glimt (Nor); Tobol (Kaz) 1-2 Viktoria Plzen (Svk); Midtjylland (Den) 3-3 Legia Warsaw (Pol); Lille (Fra) 2-1 Rijeka (Cro); Genk (Bel) 2-1 Adana Demirspor (Tur); Fenerbahce (Tur) 5-1 Twente (Ned); Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 2-3 Besiktas (Tur); AZ (Ned) 1-1 Brann (Nor); Rapid Vienna (Aut) 1-0 Fiorentina (Ita); Hearts (Sco) 1-2 PAOK (Gre); Nordsjaelland (Den) 5-0 Partizan Belgrade (Srb); Osasuna (Spa) 1-2 Club Brugge (Bel); Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 4-1 Celje (Svn)

Aug 31:
Dnipro-1 (Ukr) 1-2 Spartak Trnava (Svk) (*AET*, agg 2-3); Aston Villa (Eng) 3-0 Hibernian (Sco) (agg 8-0); BATE Borisov (Blr) 1-0 Ballkani (Kos) (agg 2-4); Ferencvaros (Hun) 3-0 Zalgiris (Ltu) (agg 7-0); Breidablik (Isl) 1-0 Struga (Mkd) (agg 2-0); HJK (Fin) 2-0 Farul Constanta (Rou) (agg 3-2); Partizani (Alb) 1-1 Astana (Kaz) (agg 1-2); Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger) 2-0 Levski Sofia (Bul) (agg 3-1); APOEL (Cyp) 1-2 Gent (Bel) (agg 1-4); Bodo/Glimt (Nor) 3-2 Sepsi (Rou) (*AET*, agg 5-4); Viktoria Plzen (Svk) 3-0 Tobol (Kaz) (agg 5-1); Legia Warsaw (Pol) 1-1 Midtjylland (Den) (*AET*, agg p4-4); Rijeka (Cro) 1-1 Lille (Fra) (*AET*, agg 2-3); Adana Demirspor (Tur) 1-0 Genk (Bel) (*AET*, agg 2-2p); Twente (Ned) 0-1 Fenerbahce (Tur) (agg 1-6); Besiktas (Tur) 1-0 Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) (agg 4-2); Brann (Nor) 3-2 AZ (Ned) (*AET*, agg 4-4p); Fiorentina (Ita) 2-0 Rapid Vienna (Aut) (agg 2-1); PAOK (Gre) 4-0 Hearts (Sco) (agg 6-1); Partizan Belgrade (Srb) 0-1 Nordsjaelland (Den) (agg 0-6); Club Brugge (Bel) 2-2 Osasuna (Spa) (agg 4-3); Celje (Svn) 1-1 Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) (agg 5-2)

Group Stage Draw

Group A
Lille (Fra), Slovan Bratislava (Svk), Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn), Ki Klaksvik (Fro)

Group B
Gent (Bel), Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr), Zorya Luhansk (Ukr), Breidablik (Isl)

Group C
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro), Viktoria Plzen (Cze), Astana (Kaz), Ballkani (Kos)

Group D
Club Brugge (Bel), Bode/Glimt (Nor), Besiktas (Tur), Lugano (Sui)

Group E
AZ (Ned), Aston Villa (Eng), Legia Warsaw (Pol), Zrinjski Mostar (Bih)

Group F
Ferencvaros (Hun), Fiorentina (Ita), Genk (Bel), Cukaricki (Srb)

Group G
Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger), PAOK (Gre), HJK (Fin), Aberdeen (Sco)

Group H
Fenerbahce (Tur), Ludogorets (Bul), Spartak Trnava (Svk), Nordsjaelland (Den)

**Group stage commenced September 21*

SOUTH AMERICA

2023 COPA LIBERTADORES

Quarter-Finals – 1st Leg

Aug 22 – La Paz
Bolivar (Bol) 0
Internacional (Bra) 1 (Valencia 16)

Aug 23 – Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors (Arg) 0
Racing (Arg) 0

Aug 23 – Pereira
Deportivo Pereira (Col) 0
Palmeiras (Bra) 4 (Veiga 23 pen, Rocha 31, Mayke 34, Rony 82)

Aug 24 – Rio deJaneiro
Fluminense (Bra) 2 (Andre 43, Cano 59)
Olimpia (Par) 0

Quarter-Finals – 2nd Leg

Aug 29 – Porto Alegre
Internacional (Bra) 2 (Valencia 11, 60)
Bolivar (Bol) 0
Internacional win 3-0 on aggregate

Aug 30 – Avellaneda
Racing (Arg) 0
Boca Juniors (Arg) 0
0-0 on aggregate. Boca Juniors win 4-1 on pens

Aug 30 – Sao Paulo
Palmeiras (Bra) 0
Deportivo Pereira (Col) 0
Palmeiras win 4-0 on aggregate

Aug 31 – Asuncion
Olimpia (Par) 1 (Zabala 44)
Fluminense (Bra) 3 (John Kennedy 24, Cano 80, 90+1)
Fluminense win 5-1 on aggregate

Semi-Finals

Sep 26-28:
Boca Juniors (Arg) v Palmeiras (Bra); Fluminense (Bra) v Internacional (Bra)

**Teams drawn first play the first leg at home, with the second legs taking place October 3-5*

2023 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Quarter-Finals – 1st Leg

Aug 22 – Sao Paulo
Corinthians (Bra) 1 (Gil 17)
Estudiantes (Arg) 0

Aug 23 – Rio deJaneiro
Botafogo (Bra) 1 (Gabriel 56)
Defensa y Justicia (Arg) 1 (Tripichio 78)

Aug 24 – Belo Horizonte
America Mineiro (Bra) 1 (Mastriani 69)
Fortaleza (Bra) 3 (Guilherme 15, 41, Pochettino 21)

Aug 24 – Quito
LDU (Ecu) 2 (Julio 2, Ibarra 25)
Sao Paulo (Bra) 1 (Moura 80)

Quarter-Finals – 2nd Leg

Aug 29 – La Plata
Estudiantes (Arg) 1 (Mendez 1)
Corinthians (Bra) 0
1-1 on aggregate. Corinthians win 3-2 on pens

Aug 30 – Banfield
Defensa y Justicia (Arg) 2 (Fernandez 15, 72)
Botafogo (Bra) 1 (Bologna 45+3 og)
Defensa y Justicia win 3-2 on aggregate

Aug 31 – Fortaleza
Fortaleza (Bra) 2 (Guilherme 22, Marinho 66)
America Mineiro (Bra) 1 (Breno 89)
Fortaleza win 5-1 on aggregate

Aug 31 – Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo (Bra) 1 (Arboleda 77)
LDU (Ecu) 0
2-2 on aggregate. LDU win 5-4 on pens

Semi-Finals

Sep 26-28:
LDU (Ecu) v Defensa y Justicia (Arg); Corinthians (Bra) v Fortaleza (Bra)

**Teams drawn first play the first leg at home, with the second legs taking place October 3-5*

ASIA

2023-24 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group Stage Draw

Group A
Pakhtakor (Uzb), Al Fayha (KSA), Ahal (Tkm), Al Ain (UAE)

Group B
Al Sadd (Qat), Nasaf Qarsi (Uzb), Al Faisaly (Jor), Sharjah (UAE)

Group C
Al Ittihad (KSA), Sepahan (Irn), Al Quwa Al Jawiya (Irq), AGMK (Uzb)

Group D
Al Hilal (KSA), Nassaji Mazandaran (Irn), Mumbai City (Ind), Navbahor (Uzb)

Group E
Persepolis (Irn), Al Duhail (Qat), Istiklol (Tjk), Al Nassr (KSA)

Group F
Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (Kor), Bangkok United (Tha), Lion City Sailors (Sgp), Kitchee (Hkg)

Group G
Yokohama F. Marinos (Jpn), Shandong Taishan (Chn), Kaya–Iloilo (Phi), Incheon United (Kor)

Group H
Buriram United (The), Ventforet Kofu (Jpn), Melbourne City (Aus), Zhejiang (Chn)

Group I
Ulsan Hyundai (Kor), Kawasaki Frontale (Jpn), Johor Darul Ta'zim (Mas), BG Pathum United (Tha)

Group J
Wuhan Three Towns (Chn), Pohang Steelers (Kor), Hanoi (Vie), Urawa Red Diamonds (Jpn)

**Group stage commenced September 18*

2023-24 AFC CUP

Group Stage Draw

Group A
Al Ahed (Lbn), Al Fotuwa (Syr), Jabal Al Mukaber (Ple), Al Nahda (Oma)

Group B
Al Wehdat (Jor), Al Kuwait (Kuw), Al Kahrabaa (Irq), Al Ittihad (Syr)

Group C
Al Zawraa (Irq), Al Riffa (Bhr), Nejmeh (Lbn), Al Arabi (Kuw)

Group D
Odisha (Ind), Bashundhara Kings (Ban), Maziya (Mdv), Mohun Bagan SG (Ind)

Group E
Ravshan Kulob (Tjk), Altyn Asyr (Tkm), Abdysh-Ata Kant (Kgz), Merw Mary (Tkm)

Group F
DH Cebu (Phi), Macarthur FC (Aus), Shan United (Mya), Phnom Penh Crown (Cam)

Group G
Terengganu (Mas), Bali United (Idn), Stallion Laguna (Phi), Central Coast Mariners (Aus)

Group H
Haiphong (Vie), Hougang United (Sgp), Sabah (Mas), PSM Makassar (Idn)

Group I
Chao Pak Kei (Mac), Taiwan Steel (Tpe), Ulaanbaatar (Mng), Taichung Futuro (Tpe)

**Group stage commenced September 18*

Final Tables 2023

TAIWAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Taiwan Steel (C)	14	11	1	2	24	8	34
Taiwan Shihu	14	8	4	2	25	15	28
Taichung Futuro	14	6	3	5	25	18	21
Hang Yuan	14	6	2	6	17	19	20
Taipower	14	5	3	6	23	14	18
AC Taipei	14	5	3	6	12	15	18
Ming Chuan University (R)	14	5	2	7	17	28	17
Taipei Deva Dragons (R)	14	0	2	12	11	37	2

VIETNAM

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cong An Ha Noi	13	7	3	3	29	15	24
Dong A Thanh Hoa	13	6	5	2	20	15	23
Hanoi	13	6	4	3	18	12	22
Viettel	13	5	6	2	14	11	21
Haiphong	13	4	7	2	14	13	19
Binh Dinh	13	5	4	4	17	17	19
Nam Dinh	13	4	7	2	12	13	19
Hong Linh Ha Tinh	13	4	6	3	20	20	18
Song Lam Nghe An	13	3	7	3	14	15	16
Hoang Anh Gia Lai	13	2	8	3	15	16	14
Khanh Hoa	13	2	7	4	11	14	13
SHB Da Nang	13	1	7	5	8	15	10
Ho Chi Minh City	13	2	2	9	19	27	8
Binh Duong	13	0	7	6	13	21	7

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cong An Ha Noi (C)	20	11	5	4	39	21	38
Hanoi	20	11	5	4	35	22	38
Viettel	20	8	8	4	23	17	32
Dong A Thanh Hoa	20	8	7	5	27	25	31
Nam Dinh	20	7	8	5	19	19	29
Haiphong	20	6	8	6	20	23	26
Binh Dinh	20	6	6	8	23	28	24
Hong Linh Ha Tinh	20	4	11	5	24	30	23

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Song Lam Nghe An	18	6	7	5	19	20	25
Hoang Anh Gia Lai	18	5	8	5	19	19	23
Khanh Hoa	18	4	7	7	18	22	19
Binh Duong	18	2	9	7	19	23	15
Ho Chi Minh City	18	4	3	11	21	32	15
SHB Da Nang (R)	18	2	8	8	11	19	14

CONCACAF

2023 CARIBBEAN CUP

Group A

Aug 24: Defence Force (Tri) 1-1 Cavalier (Jam)
Aug 25: Moca (Dom) 1-0 AC Port of Spain (Tri)
Aug 30: Golden Lion (Mtq) 0-1 Defence Force (Tri)
Aug 31: Cavalier (Jam) 2-1 AC Port of Spain (Tri)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cavalier	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Defence Force	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Moca	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Golden Lion	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
AC Port of Spain	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

Sep 19-20:
Cavalier (Jam) v Moca (Dom); AC Port of Spain (Tri) v Golden Lion (Mtq)
Sep 26-28:
Moca (Dom) v Golden Lion (Mtq); AC Port of Spain (Tri) v Defence Force (Tri)
Oct 4:
Golden Lion (Mtq) v Cavalier (Jam); Defence Force (Tri) v Moca (Dom)

Group B

Aug 23:
Harbour View (Jam) 1-0 Dunbeholden (Jam)
Aug 24: Cibao (Dom) 1-1 Atletico Pantoja (Dom)
Aug 30:
Atletico Pantoja (Dom) 1-1 Dunbeholden (Jam)
Aug 31: Robinhood (Sur) 1-0 Cibao (Dom)

Current standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Harbour View	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Robinhood	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Atletico Pantoja	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Cibao	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Dunbeholden	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

Sep 20-21:
Atletico Pantoja (Dom) v Harbour View (Jam); Dunbeholden (Jam) v Robinhood (Sur)
Sep 27-28:
Harbour View (Jam) v Robinhood (Sur); Dunbeholden (Jam) v Cibao (Dom)
Oct 5:
Robinhood (Sur) v Atletico Pantoja (Dom); Cibao (Dom) v Harbour View (Jam)

2023 CENTRAL AMERICAN CUP

Group A

Aug 22: Cartagines (Crc) 5-0 Jocoro (Slv)
Aug 23: Universitario (Pan) 0-0 Saprissa (Crc)
Aug 29: Saprissa (Crc) 5-0 Coban Imperial (Gua); Cartagines (Crc) 2-2 Universitario (Pan)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saprissa (Q)	4	3	1	0	10	0	10
Cartagines (Q)	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Universitario	4	1	3	0	6	3	6
Coban Imperial	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Jocoro	4	0	0	4	2	17	0

Group B

Aug 22: Independiente (Pan) 2-1 Real Esteli (Nca); FAS (Slv) 2-4 Olimpia (Hon)
Aug 29: Olimpia (Hon) 2-0 Xelaju (Gua); Independiente (Pan) 5-0 FAS (Slv)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Independiente (Q)	4	3	1	0	11	3	10
Real Esteli (Q)	4	3	0	1	5	2	9
Olimpia	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Xelaju	4	1	0	3	3	7	3
FAS	4	0	0	4	3	13	0

Group C

Aug 23: Aguila (Slv) 1-4 Comunicaciones (Gua)
Aug 24: Real Espana (Hon) 0-0 Diriangen (Nca)
Aug 30: Real Espana (Hon) 3-0 Aguila (Slv); Comunicaciones (Gua) 1-2 Herediano (Crc)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Herediano (Q)	4	3	1	8	8	4	10
Comunicaciones (Q)	4	3	0	9	9	4	9
Real Espana	4	1	1	6	6	6	4
Aguila	4	1	0	2	2	9	3
Diriangen	4	0	2	1	1	3	2

Group D

Aug 23: Olancho (Hon) 3-2 Verdes (Blz)
Aug 24:
Sporting San Miguelito (Pan) 0-1 Alajuelense (Crc)
Aug 31:
Olancho (Hon) 0-2 Sporting San Miguelito (Pan); Alajuelense (Crc) 5-1 Motagua (Hon)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alajuelense (Q)	4	4	0	0	10	1	12
Motagua (Q)	4	3	0	1	9	5	9
Sporting San Miguelito	4	2	0	2	6	3	6
Olancho	4	1	0	3	3	6	3
Verdes	4	0	0	4	2	15	0

Quarter-Finals

Sep 26-28:
Cartagines (Crc) v Alajuelense (Crc); Comunicaciones (Gua) v Herediano (Crc); Real Esteli (Nca) v Saprissa (Crc); Motagua (Hon) v Independiente (Pan)

**Teams drawn first play the first leg at home, with the second legs taking place October 3-5*

Final Tables 2023

BARBADOS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Weymouth Wales (C)	21	18	1	2	76	18	55
Ellerton	21	14	3	4	57	26	45
Brittons Hill	22	13	3	6	43	29	42
Paradise	22	12	2	8	52	40	38
Wotton	22	11	5	6	51	44	38
UWI Blackbirds	21	10	4	7	55	33	34
Empire Club	21	9	3	9	39	40	30
Deacons	22	7	3	12	40	55	24
St. Andrew Lions	22	5	7	10	42	59	22
Notre Dame	22	5	4	13	50	61	19
BDF (R)	21	5	1	15	27	65	16
Silver Sands (R)	21	2	0	19	18	80	6

GUYANA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guyana Defence Force (C)	9	8	1	0	34	1	25
Western Tigers	9	7	1	1	31	8	22
Police	9	7	0	2	40	6	21
Santos	9	7	0	2	34	5	21
Den Amstel	9	4	0	5	11	28	12
Buxton United	9	2	2	5	6	17	8
Ann's Grove	9	2	1	6	10	34	7
Fruta Conquerors*	9	3	0	6	10	20	6
Victoria Kings (R)	9	1	1	7	5	29	4
Milerock (R)	9	0	2	7	4	37	2

**Deducted 3 points*

AFRICA

2023-24 CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

First Qualifying Round

Aug 18-20:
Hafia (Gui) 0-0 Generation Foot (Sen); Garde Nationale (Nig) w/o AS Douanes (Bfa); Bo Rangers (Sle) 1-1 LISCR (Lbr); Medeama (Gha) 1-0 Remo Stars (Nga); KMKM (Zan) 1-2 St George (Eth); APR FC (Rwa) 1-1 Gaadiidka (Som); CS Bendje (Gab) 1-1 Bumauru (Bdi); African Stars (Nam) 2-1 Power Dynamos (Zam); UD Songo (Moz) 1-0 Green Mambas (Swz); Dragon FC (Eqg) 0-2 Big Bullets (Mwi); Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby) 4-3 Enyimba (Nga); CotonSport Benin (Ben) 0-0 ASEC Abidjan (Civ); CS Constantine (Alg) 0-2 Etoile Sahel (Tun); ASKO Kara (Tog) 0-1 Royal Armed Forces (Mar); Real Bamako (Mli) 0-0 Coton Sport (Cmr); FC Nouadibou (Mtn) 2-0 Al Ahly Tripoli (Lby); Primero Agosto (Ang) 1-0 AS Vita Club (Cod); Salam (Ssd) w/o Al Hilal (Sdn); AS Otoho (Cgo) 1-1 Al Merreikh (Sdn); ASAS (Dji) 0-2 Young Africans (Tan); Jwaneng Galaxy (Bot) 2-0 Vipers (Uga); Djabal Club (Com) 0-1 Orlando Pirates (RSA)

Aug 24-27:
Generation Foot (Sen) 2-2 Hafia (Gui) (agg 2-2a); AS Douanes (Bfa) w/o Garde Nationale (Nig) (*walkover for AS Douanes*); LISCR (Lbr) 0-1 Bo Rangers (Sle) (agg 1-2); Remo Stars (Nga) 1-0 Medeama (Gha) (agg 1-1p); St George (Eth) 3-1 KMKM (Zan) (agg 5-2); Gaadiidka (Som) 0-2 APR FC (Rwa) (agg 1-3); Bumauru (Bdi) 5-1 CS Bendje (Gab) (agg 6-2); Power Dynamos (Zam) 1-0 African Stars (Nam) (agg a2-2); Green Mambas (Swz) 1-1 UD Songo (Moz) (agg 1-2); Big Bullets (Mwi) 1-0 Dragon FC (Eqg) (agg 3-0); Enyimba (Nga) 0-0 Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby) (agg 3-4); ASEC Abidjan (Civ) 2-0 CotonSport Benin (Ben) (agg 2-0); Etoile Sahel (Tun) 1-0 CS Constantine (Alg) (agg 3-0); Royal Armed Forces (Mar) 7-0 ASKO Kara (Tog) (agg 8-0); Coton Sport (Cmr) 0-2 Real Bamako (Mli) (agg 0-2); Al Ahly Tripoli (Lby) 1-0 FC Nouadibou (Mtn) (agg 1-2); AS Vita Club (Cod) 1-1 Primero Agosto (Ang) (agg 1-2); Al Hilal (Sdn) w/o Salam (Ssd) (*walkover for Al Hilal*); Al Merreikh (Sdn) 0-0 AS Otoho (Cgo) (agg a1-1); Young Africans (Tan) 5-1 ASAS (Dji) (agg 7-1); Vipers (Uga) 2-1 Jwaneng Galaxy (Bot) (agg 2-3); Orlando Pirates (RSA) 3-0 Djabal Club (Com) (agg 4-0)

Second Qualifying Round

Sep 15-17:
Hafia (Gui) v Wydad Casablanca (Mar); AS Douanes (Bfa) v Esperance (Tun); Bo Rangers (Sle) v Chabab Belouizdad (Alg); Medeama (Gha) v Horoya (Gui); St George (Eth) v Al Ahly (Egy); APR FC (Rwa) v Pyramids (Egy); Bumauru (Bdi) v Mamelodi Sundowns (RSA); Power Dynamos (Zam) v Simba (Tan); UD Songo (Moz) v Petro Atletico (Ang); Big Bullets (Mwi) v TP Mazembe (Cod); Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby) v ASEC Abidjan (Civ); Etoile Sahel (Tun) v Royal Armed Forces (Mar); Real Bamako (Mli) v FC Nouadibou (Mtn); Primero Agosto (Ang) v Al Hilal (Sdn); Al Merreikh (Sdn) v Young Africans (Tan); Jwaneng Galaxy (Bot) v Orlando Pirates (RSA)

**Teams drawn first will play the first leg at home, with the second legs taking place September 29-October 1*

2023-24 CAF CONFEDERATION CUP

First Qualifying Round

Aug 18-20:
Bendel Insurance (Nga) 1-0 ASO Chlef (Alg); FUS Rabat (Mar) 3-0 AS Loto (Ben); Casa Sports (Sen) 1-1 Etoile Filante (Bfa); Arta Solar 7 (Dji) 3-0 Horseed (Som); Singida Big Stars (Tan) 4-1 JKU (Zan); Bahir Dar (Eth) 2-1 Azam (Tan); Olympique Beja (Tun) 0-1 Abu Salim (Lby); Kakamenga Homeboyz (Ken) 0-0 Al Hilal Benghazi (Lby); Sekhukhune United (RSA) w/o Young Buffaloes (Swz); Cano Sport (Eqg) 1-1 Maestro United (Zam); Ferroviario Maputo (Moz) w/o Belle Lumiere (Com); Gaborone United (Bot) 0-1 Elgeco Plus (Mad); Amicale Douanes (Mtn) 2-2 SOAR (Gui); ASCK (Tog) 0-0 Amadou Diallo (Civ); Milo (Gui) 1-1 Dreams FC (Gha); AS Douanes (Nig) w/o Kallon FC (Sle); Watanga (Lbr) 1-3 Stade Malien (Mli); Hay Al Arab (Sdn) w/o Aigle Noir (Bdi); Haidoub (Sdn) 0-1 Al Mereikh Juba (Ssd); Academica Lobito (Ang) 2-1 La Passe (Sey)

Aug 24-27:
ASO Chlef (Alg) 1-0 Bendel Insurance (Nga) (agg 1-1p); AS Loto (Ben) 0-2 FUS Rabat (Mar) (agg 0-5); Etoile Filante (Bfa) 0-0 Casa Sports (Sen) (agg a1-1); Horseed (Som) 0-3 Arta Solar 7 (Dji) (agg 0-6); JKU (Zan) 2-0 Singida Big Stars (Tan) (agg 3-4); Azam (Tan) 2-1 Bahir Dar (Eth) (agg 3-3p); Abu Salim (Lby) 0-0 Olympique Beja (Tun) (agg 1-0); Al Hilal Benghazi (Lby) 4-1 Kakamenga Homeboyz (Ken) (agg 4-1); Young Buffaloes (Swz) w/o Sekhukhune United (RSA) (*walkover for Sekhukhune United*); Maestro United (Zam) 3-0 Cano Sport (Eqg) (agg 4-1); Belle Lumiere (Com) w/o Ferroviario Maputo (Moz) (*walkover for Ferroviario Maputo*); Elgeco Plus (Mad) 1-3 Gaborone United (Bot) (agg 2-3); SOAR (Gui) 0-0 Amicale Douanes (Mtn) (agg a2-2); Amadou Diallo (Civ) 2-1 ASCK (Tog) (agg 2-1); Dreams FC (Gha) 2-1 Milo (Gui) (agg 3-2); Kallon FC (Sle) w/o AS Douanes (Nig) (*walkover for Kallon FC*); Stade Malien (Mli) 4-1 Watanga (Lbr) (agg 7-2); Aigle Noir (Bdi) w/o Hay Al Arab (Sdn) (*walkover for Aigle Noir*); Al Mereikh Juba (Ssd) 0-0 Haidoub (Sdn) (agg 1-0); La Passe (Sey) 2-2 Academica Lobito (Ang) (agg 3-4)

Second Qualifying Round

Sep 15-17:
Bendel Insurance (Nga) v RS Berkane (Mar); FUS Rabat (Mar) v USM Alger (Alg); Etoile Filante (Bfa) v Rivers United (Nga); Arta Solar 7 (Dji) v Zamalek (Egy); Singida Big Stars (Tan) v Future FC (Egy); Bahir Dar (Eth) v Club Africain (Tun); Abu Salim (Lby) v Kampala Capital City Authority (Uga); Al Hilal Benghazi (Lby) v Rayon Sport (Rwa); Sekhukhune United (RSA) v St Eloi Lupopo (Cod); Maestro United (Zam) v Diables Noirs (Cog); Ferroviario Maputo (Moz) v Sagrada Esperanca (Ang); Gaborone United (Bot) v SuperSport United (RSA); SOAR (Gui) v Amadou Diallo (Civ); Dreams FC (Gha) v Kallon FC (Sle); Stade Malien (Mli) v Hay Aigle Noir (Bdi); Al Mereikh Juba (Ssd) v Academica Lobito (Ang)

**Teams drawn first will play the first leg at home, with the second legs taking place September 29-October 1*

2023 AFRICAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Quarter-Finals

Oct 20-22:
Simba (Tan) v Al Ahly (Egy); TP Mazembe (Cod) v Esperance (Tun); Enyimba (Nga) v Wydad Casablanca (Mar); Petro Atletico (Ang) v Mamelodi Sundowns (RSA)

**Teams drawn first play the first leg at home, with the second legs taking place October 24-25.*

Semi-finals to take place October 29-November 1.

Final to be played on November 5 and 11.

October 2023 *Vol. 64 No.2*

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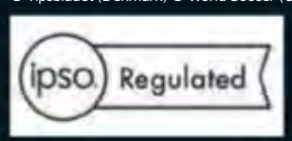

Christian Fuchs

Real Madrid 3 Schalke 4

2014-15 Champions League last 16, Bernabeu

Schalke headed to Madrid in March 2015 trailing 2-0 after the first leg, 12 months after a 9-2 aggregate defeat to Real at the same stage the previous season. Yet on a remarkable night, they gave the Spanish giants a huge scare in an end-to-end thriller...

Memorable night... Schalke left-back Christian Fuchs

"As a professional footballer, you want to win every time you set foot on the field but you're also a realist. What can you expect when you've just lost the first leg 2-0 at home and then you've got to go to the Bernabeu?

It was clear that we were the underdogs and had nothing to lose. That's where we got our strength. We were able to play freely and just enjoy the moment.

We were so close to turning it around. With the away-goals rule, we needed one more to eliminate Real Madrid. To have scored five there would have been the pinnacle, particularly after losing so heavily to them the year before. Even if we were knocked out in the end, it's still something to look back on with a lot of pride – it makes me smile just thinking about it.

Nobody can match Real Madrid's Champions League history. It's a trophy they want to win every single year and they'd done so the previous season. Before facing us, they hadn't lost in 21 Champions League games at the Bernabeu and they'd never conceded more than three goals at home in the competition.

It was a great occasion: a mild evening in Madrid, under the floodlights, playing against an amazing team in front of 70,000 fans. It was an opportunity to showcase yourself on the biggest stage. I wanted to prove how good I was and that I belonged at that level. Real lined up with all the stars – Karim Benzema, Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale – which speaks for itself. They took the game seriously.

We gave it a real go, even if that left us exposed at times. We knew that if we were brave going forward, we would get chances. Real Madrid liked to play with the ball, but they didn't like to defend as much back then. They lacked a bit of discipline, as the opening goal showed.

I saw Tranquillo Barnetta breaking down the right side and I was completely open. I was calling like crazy and just hoping he'd find me. I took my touch and saw Iker Casillas in front of me. Maybe it wasn't the right technique, but I just wanted to smash the ball as hard as possible to not give him any chance to react. When I looked up, it was in the net. You can imagine how it feels when you see a dream like that come true.

When I was around 12 or 13, my youth coach said that his biggest wish was for one of his players to score at the Bernabeu. When I scored, that was the first thing that came to my mind. It gave me goosebumps. The day after, I reached out to the coach. It was a great memory for both of us.

Real Madrid had amazing players with individual qualities. They were always going to find ways to unlock our defence and make things happen after we went ahead. Suddenly we were 3-2 down. The fact that we came back again said a lot about our mentality and how we approached the game. We didn't fall victim to our own fear; we just kept going.

That Schalke team had some great talent like Leroy Sane, Julian Draxler and Leon Goretzka. That was Sane's first season with us and you could see right away where his career would take him. He scored an incredible goal to equalise before Klaas-Jan Huntelaar got the winner, his second of the game.

Even though we lost the tie, we made our fans happy. We celebrated together because of the way we'd played and that we'd kept going. We were disappointed at missing the chance to really make history, of course, but we were massively proud of the win."

Interview by Sean Cole

Real Madrid
Coach: Carlo Ancelotti

Casillas; Varane, Pepe, Arbeloa; Fabio Coentrao, Kroos, Khedira, Isco; Ronaldo, Benzema, Bale

Schalke
Coach: Roberto Di Matteo

Fuchs; Barnetta, Neustadter, Meyer, Howedes; Hoger, Choupo-Moting, Huntelaar, Matip, Nastasic, Wellenreuther

> "When I looked up, it was in the net. You can imagine how it feels when you see a dream like that come true"

Dream come true... Fuchs fires his shot past Iker Casillas

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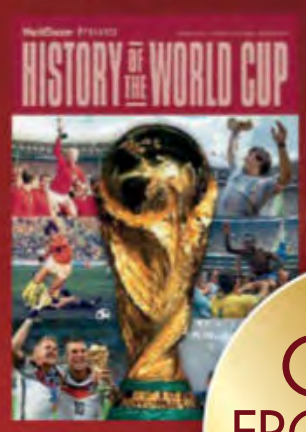

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